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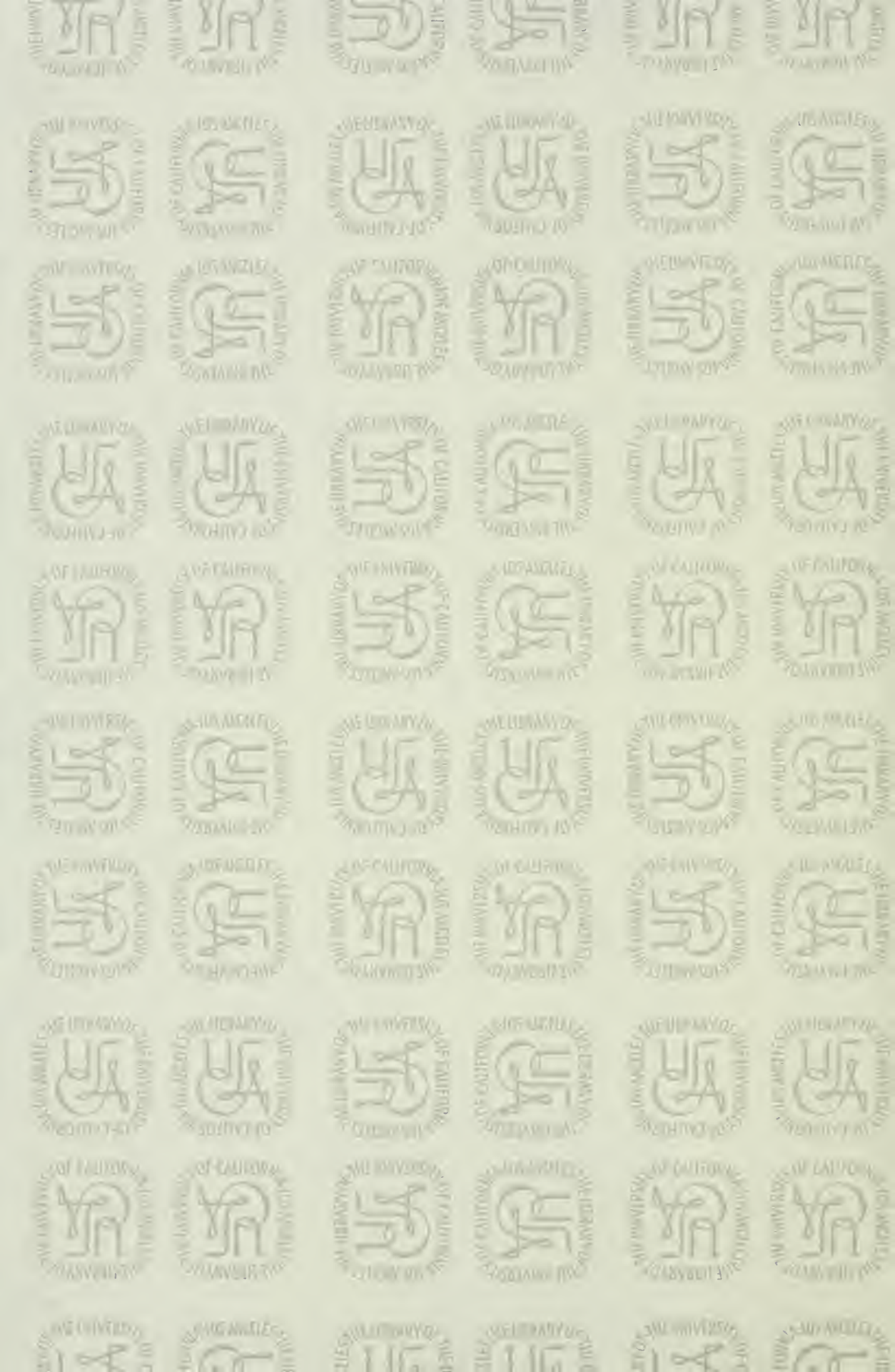

WILLIAM BLAKE

MYSTIC

NOTE.

This issue of Young's poem with Blake engravings, is reproduced in reduced facsimile from the original Edition 15 × 12 published by Edwards, New Bond Street, London, in the year 1797.

TO

STANLEY

MY BROTHER

WILLIAM BLAKE, MYSTIC

A STUDY

BY

ADELINE M. BUTTERWORTH

TOGETHER WITH

YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS: NIGHTS I & II

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

WILLIAM BLAKE

AND FRONTISPIECE

DEATH'S DOOR, FROM BLAIR'S 'THE GRAVE'

LIVERPOOL
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William Blake, Mystic

A Study

WILLIAM BLAKE, poet, artist and engraver! Yet to how few persons is he known, and how much beloved by the few who do know him! He belongs, to use an old Quaker phrase, 'to the world outside,' yet that is the world that cannot understand him, for he speaks to the inner soul, 'to the world inside,' and it is only the few who can interpret that speech; so that William Blake stands little chance of ever becoming the idol even of the literary world.

A cultured person may be interested in or attracted by either a poem or a painting of his, but he must possess a kindred spirit—he must belong to 'the world inside,' if he would grasp the real meaning of any one of Blake's poems or pictures. It is not sufficient to have an intelligent appreciation of art to understand wherein lies the charm of Blake's airy figures—it is not sufficient to know the laws of rhythm to comprehend his poems, for more than mere culture is demanded from Blake's appreciator,

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and that more cannot be learned in the schools—it must be innate—he must know, almost intuitively, that which Blake's soul has grasped and which his mind and hand have put into concrete form. If it is not seized by intuition, its power will never be realised, for no amount of technical knowledge aids in understanding the deep things of the soul. If such an one does not possess that power, let him close the book of poems by William Blake—let such an one leave unopened the copy of Young's *Night Thoughts* or that of Blair's *Grave,* both illustrated by Blake, as he would in all probability only see some grotesque figures, which in their huge proportions bear perhaps some resemblance to those of Michael Angelo and would fail to find any reason for Blake choosing to engrave the moment of the 'soul's departure from the body,' or the 're-union of the soul and of the body after death,' for, unless he feel their charm when first he sees them, he will never discover it, though he spend many hours in studying them. No! It needs the insight of the mystic—of those belonging to the 'world inside' to understand the mystic soul of William Blake; therefore, he is to-day, as he was more than a century ago, neglected and passed over by the literary and artistic world, unless with their culture they possess a soul capable of responding to the inner meaning of the moments depicted in Blake's pictures, apart from their artistic merit.

Yet to appreciate him it is not enough to possess the mystical insight unless it is allied with culture and intelligence, for an uneducated mystic would no more be able to appreciate nor understand his poems or pictures than would the cultured non-mystical person ; there lies his charm and therein lies the explanation possibly why William Blake is gaining at last some notoriety—of the reason why more than a century after he illustrated the 'Blair,' he is receiving recognition as a mystical poet and artist.

Why should he have had to wait so long ?

Why should he now be receiving the homage of the few who know and appreciate his great talent for depicting the soul's deep feeling ?

Surely because to-day Mysticism stands on a new level. When William Blake lived and wrote his mystical poems and painted his visions, "the world outside" condemned them, for it knew nothing of such things. It was a cultured world—the world that condemned him—for then, as now, the general public passed him by because he never came within their radius—Blake could never be that which Tennyson became, the poetical idol of the people.

It was a cultured world in a conventional period that condemned him, a world that condemned all originality, a world without any understanding of mysticism and as it was obliged to explain these

original productions of Blake—productions which seemed quite incomprehensible to it—and as it had no knowledge of the psychical mind nor of things mystical, it disposed of Blake and of his poems and pictures by stigmatising them as the work of a madman. Yet even in that material age there were some who possessed the insight necessary to appreciate Blake and his great genius, as Gilchrist's standard *Life of William Blake* records; they prevented his name from passing into oblivion by keeping the tiny flame of interest burning until the world of culture that had condemned Blake a century ago awoke to the fact that he was, at least, an interesting personality, now realising that personality under any form is worth studying; so from that interest in him as a man—as an unusual personality—as a subject for the psychologists to dissect, and also because the mystical mind is now acknowledged to be a sane mind, therefore its utterances and productions are on the same level as the productions of other normal minds, Blake has been rescued and has at last a chance of winning lasting fame by his appeal to those whose souls are attuned to his, and who can feel with him and see

> ' . . . a world in a grain of sand,
> And a heaven in a wild flower,
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
> And eternity in an hour.'

The cultured world of to-day knows the name of William Blake, because the term culture now includes some knowledge of the science of psychology, and all who would study that subject gladly avail themselves of so unique a personality, for did he not repeat during his lifetime, when accused of making his figures of so fantastic a character, that he only painted his visions. These visions were real things to Blake, as they are to all mystics, only in Blake's case the visionary power which he possessed in so remarkable a degree was accompanied by the gifts of a poet and also of those of an artist. Think what a unique position he therefore holds among the great spirits of the world, for a great spirit Blake must assuredly be named if we accede to the usually-accepted formula that a man is great in spirit if he possesses the power of discerning the inner truth which underlies all things—if he is large-souled enough to respond to its demand. In fact, it seems almost a condition of greatness that it, and it alone, is capable of grasping and understanding the truth which lies hidden. Pater speaks in his *Marius* of the 'hiddenness of perfect things,' which perhaps means that the thing in its perfection is hidden from the perception of the meaner spirit and so protected, though nevertheless its hiddenness is no bar to the true spirit of the mystic, who is in some inexpressible way 'one' with its perfection.

We have only to read a few verses of some of Blake's poems to find the mystic spirit running through them; to see how underneath the outward form he finds an inner form, which thought he clothes as a true mystic ever does in the outer resemblance. Notice how he speaks of the 'angels' which he sees in the 'blossom trees'—of how a thistle at his feet appeared to him to be an 'old man grey' who stood in his path—how he wrote to his friend, Mr. Butts, of his 'first vision of light' which he saw one day when he was sitting on the 'yellow sands' of the seashore, and notice also the true mystic's delight in his visions when he writes of how they will be

'Re-engraved time after time
Ever in their youthful prime;
My designs unchanged remain;
Time may rage, but rage in vain;
For above time's troubled fountains
On the great Atlantic Mountains,
In my golden house on high
There they shine eternally.'

When we turn to examine his engravings, we find perhaps more clearly still the mystic spirit both in the choice of subject and in its delineation. Blake would possibly have preferred exclusively engraving

his visions; but, unfortunately, though he might engrave and colour them, he could not find purchasers, so that when he was obliged to earn money to support himself and his wife, he had perforce to paint subjects which suited the taste of his patron, even engraving and colouring portraits. It is difficult to imagine Blake working upon so uncongenial a subject as a portrait of the famous Brighton beauty, Mrs. Q (uentin), yet those who have been fortunate enough to have chanced upon an original copy of that coloured engraving must have noticed the master touch in the softness and wonder of the flesh colour, and felt that the perfectness which he put into a work which must have been distasteful to him proves yet again how great a spirit he possessed within him.

But it is in his original designs that we see the real Blake—those designs which were literal copies of his visions. Of course, all great artists have an inner vision of the subject they propose to paint; they see it in their imagination; but few, if any, excepting William Blake, have painted what to them have been objective mental visions, for few people seem to have, to that extent, the mystic temperament allied with the artistic. It is a well-established fact to-day that these objective mental visions do come to persons of a certain temperament, as, for instance, in the recorded historical references to the visions of S. Francis of Assisi and those of Joan of Arc.

In fact, it was not until such recorded incidents had been vindicated by the study of psychology that Blake had a chance of coming into his inheritance of fame, for he has consistently affirmed that he only painted that which he perceived as an objective vision—he apparently saw its form and colour—though perhaps he did not always succeed in recalling those visions quite accurately; yet it is told of him that when the visions came, perhaps during the night time, he would rise from his bed and immediately begin to paint, having, as it were, the vision in front of him, and once, on being asked what happened if the visions failed him, his wife replied, 'We kneel down and pray.'

It can thus easily be seen that his work bears the stamp of originality and true greatness, for the objective mental visions are a resultant effect of the percipient's inner-self which, in Blake's case, reaches up to a level of spiritual insight which is only found in those who are pure in heart.

Allied with this visionary power, he possessed a very vivid imagination, which he draws upon largely in his illustrations to Blair's *Grave* — illustrations which are full of beauty of form and depth of feeling, and which reveal to all who have the power of perceiving it what must have been Blake's innate mystical genius which made it possible for him to design that perfect figure of a youth which he has placed (in his plate named 'Death's Door,') over the

cell hewn out of a rock into which a weather-beaten old man, leaning on a crutch, is apparently being driven by a strong wind from behind, while above the doorway Blake has placed the figure of the youth half reclining on the rock, with the rays of the sun surrounding him, full of life, hope, and strength. When we gaze upon it, it is not of death which we think but of life—eternal life, eternal strength, eternal love—which are typified by Blake in that look of glad expectation which he has placed, not only upon the face, but on every part of the body, for to Blake's mystical soul death was not the end but the gateway to eternal life.

Yet it does not follow that only a mystical nature can see beneath the surface of things, or alone possesses the power of catching the intensest moments in the lives of his fellow-men, nor that an artist who is able to depict that moment at its highest pitch must necessarily be a mystic.

Take Giotto, for instance, in almost any of his fresco work, especially perhaps the fresco in the cloister of Santa Maria Novella, at Florence, of the meeting of Anna and Joachim at the Golden Gate, and notice how he there portrays just the great moment in the lives of Anna and Joachim when they meet after a long separation. Giotto depicts their joy in that meeting. He has seized the inner spirit of that meeting, and yet no man is less of a mystic than Giotto, the Florentine painter, who

perhaps ranks highest of the world's great painters as a delineator of a passing moment at its intensest point; yet he is not a mystic, for he never chooses a mystical subject. Whereas Blake, though he too catches the spirit of the moment, searches deeper into the intricacies of the life of the spirit, seeing that side of life which seems to be only apprehended by the mystic, and therefore instead of painting as Giotto the meeting of two beloved persons, Blake chooses for his subject the re-union of the soul and of the body. There we see wherein the difference lies, and why Blake's great characteristic is not so much that he is a great artist or a great poet, but that he is before all things essentially a mystic—a seer of visions.

When we turn to the Young illustrations, which were invented and engraved by him, we see the same characteristics which mark him as a mystic in his choice of subject.

In *Night the First,* which treats of life, death, and immortality, we find him, instead of dwelling on death or the grave, choosing to depict the author—and what an effort Blake made to be conventional in doing so—lying on the ground asleep, while his soul soars 'thro' fairy fields' (lines in the poem which seized Blake's fancy), and we have the most perfect figures representative of the soul's 'fantastick measures'—airy figures of pure delight poised in the air, as only Blake could poise them.

Again, in the last plate of the same *Night*, we find the lines

'Oft bursts my song beyond the bounds of life,'

claiming Blake out of many other lines containing words of grief or sorrow; but his mystical mind passes them by while he seizes that which is his very own by innate right of comprehension and delineates a marvellous figure mounting upward with outstretched hands, in one of which is a lyre, while the chain which binds him to earth is falling from him, and the soul is rejoicing in its newly-found freedom. It holds us spell-bound.

We note, also, in the *Young* how Blake conveys a sense of motion in his figures; they appear to be coming straight from some ethereal region, only touching earth in passing, as, in the last two plates of *Night the Second*, we have figures coming to take the soul of the just man at the moment of death, though there is nothing in the engraving that suggests anything which we usually connect with death, and in the succeeding plate we see the soul carefully being carried upward by attendant angels, while a graceful figure leans down, as Rossetti's Blessed Damozel 'from the gold bar of heaven,' and with outstretched arm and hand would gently draw him upward. The two plates make a perfect whole with figures almost revolving in a circle, suggesting movement in every line of their bodies and joy in the new life of the soul. It could

surely only be the insight of the mystic which caused Blake so consistently to see always the life of the soul as something quite distinct from the life of the body, which is so clearly depicted in his illustrations to the *Young*, where he had so varied a choice of subject, but where we find him choosing so often to depict mystical things in preference to any other subject.

It is interesting to read the comment upon these designs to Young's *Night Thoughts*, published in the "advertisement" supposed to have been written by Fuseli, for the original edition of 1797:—

'Of the merit of Mr. Blake in those designs which form not only the ornament of the page, but, in many instances, the illustration of the poem, the editor conceives it to be unnecessary to speak. To the eyes of the discerning it need not be pointed out; and while a taste for the arts of design shall continue to exist, the original conception and the bold and masterly execution of this artist cannot be unnoticed or unadmired.'

Blake's mysticism is, of course, only one part of him—that he had many other sides to his character is well known, yet I maintain that though he may be praised for his productions as an artist or a poet, or condemned because of much that is incomprehensible in his work, yet running through all is a mystical spirit which can only be known and judged by a mystical mind, for it needs the possession of

that faculty to realise the deep beauty of the following words, taken from one of his poems :—

> 'He who bends to himself a joy
> Does the winged life destroy ;
> But he who kisses the joy as it flies
> Lives in eternity's sunrise.'

And so Blake stands at last on the threshold of fame, because men have grown to understand him. It is still but the threshold, for he is only known and loved by a few kindred spirits. Books engraved by him may still be found in what is named by the booksellers as 'the two-penny box.' They can still be picked up cheaply in out-of-the-way book shops, though each year they are becoming more scarce. The collectors of old books, old prints, and coloured engravings do not yet know the name of William Blake, nor do they yet know the value of his productions, though here or there one may be found who has been asked for a Blake ; but it is an unusual occurrence to find a bookseller who knows anything of his works, even though Blair's *Grave* and Young's *Night Thoughts* are becoming very rare, and it is hard to obtain a copy of either book in the original boards, which fact seems to indicate that there is at last some demand for his books.

And what a reward awaits those who discover him ! What a great treasure awaits the seeking of

those who, intuitively, will understand his greatness of spirit! How their grasp of the deeper side of things will be widened when they come face to face with one of his wonderful productions—forms, which in his delineation, seem to be all spirit.

The world has many rare treasures awaiting those who have the opportunity for seeking such things, but none will fill with purer joy the mind of the mystic than the discovery of an original engraving by William Blake, or the chance happening, perhaps, upon some of Blake's shorter poems, which are indeed masterpieces of mystical poetry.

September, 1910.

Explanation of the Engravings.

FRONTISPIECE to NIGHT the FIRST.

DEATH, in the character of an old man, having swept away with one hand part of the family seen in this print, is presenting with the other their spirits to immortality.

Page 1. Sleep, forsaking the couch of care, sheds his influence, by the touch of his magic wand, on the shepherd's flock.

Page 4. The imagery of dreaming variously delineated according to the poet's description in the passage referred to by the *.

Page 7. Death, tolling a bell, summons a person from sleep to his kingdom the grave.

Page 8. The universal empire of Death characterized by his plucking the sun from his sphere.

Page 10. An evil genius holding two phials, from one pours disease into the ear of a shepherd, and from the other scatters a blight among his flock; intimating that no condition is exempt from affliction.

Page 12. The frailty of the blessings of this life demonstrated, by a representation in which the happiness of a little family is suddenly destroyed by the accident of the husband's death from the bite of a serpent.

Page 13. The insecurity of life exemplified by the figure of Death menacing with his dart, and doubtful which he shall strike; the mother, or the infant at her breast.

Page 15. The author, encircled by thorns, emblematical of grief, lamenting the loss of his friend to the midnight hours.

Page 16. The struggling of the soul for immortality, represented by a figure holding a lyre and springing into the air, but confined by a chain to the earth.

FRONTISPIECE TO NIGHT THE SECOND.

Time endeavouring to avert the arrow of Death from two friends.

Page 19. A skeleton discovering the first symptoms of re-animation on the sounding of the archangel's trump.

Page 23. A man measuring an infant with his span, in allusion to the shortness of life.

Page 24. Our inattention to the progress of Time illustrated by a figure of that *god*, (as he is called by the poet) creeping towards us with stealthy pace, and carefully concealing his wings from our view.

Page 25. Time having passed us, is seen displaying his "broad pinions," and treading nearly on the summit of the globe, eager "to join anew Eternity his sire."

Page 26. The same power in his character of destroyer, mowing down indiscriminately the frail inhabitants of this world.

Page 27. Conscience represented as a recording angel; who is veiled, and in the act of noting down the sin of intemperance in a bacchanalian.

Page 31. A good man conversing with his past hours, and examining their report. The hours are drawn as aerial and shadowy beings, some of whom are bringing their scrolls to the inquirer, while others are carrying their record to heaven.

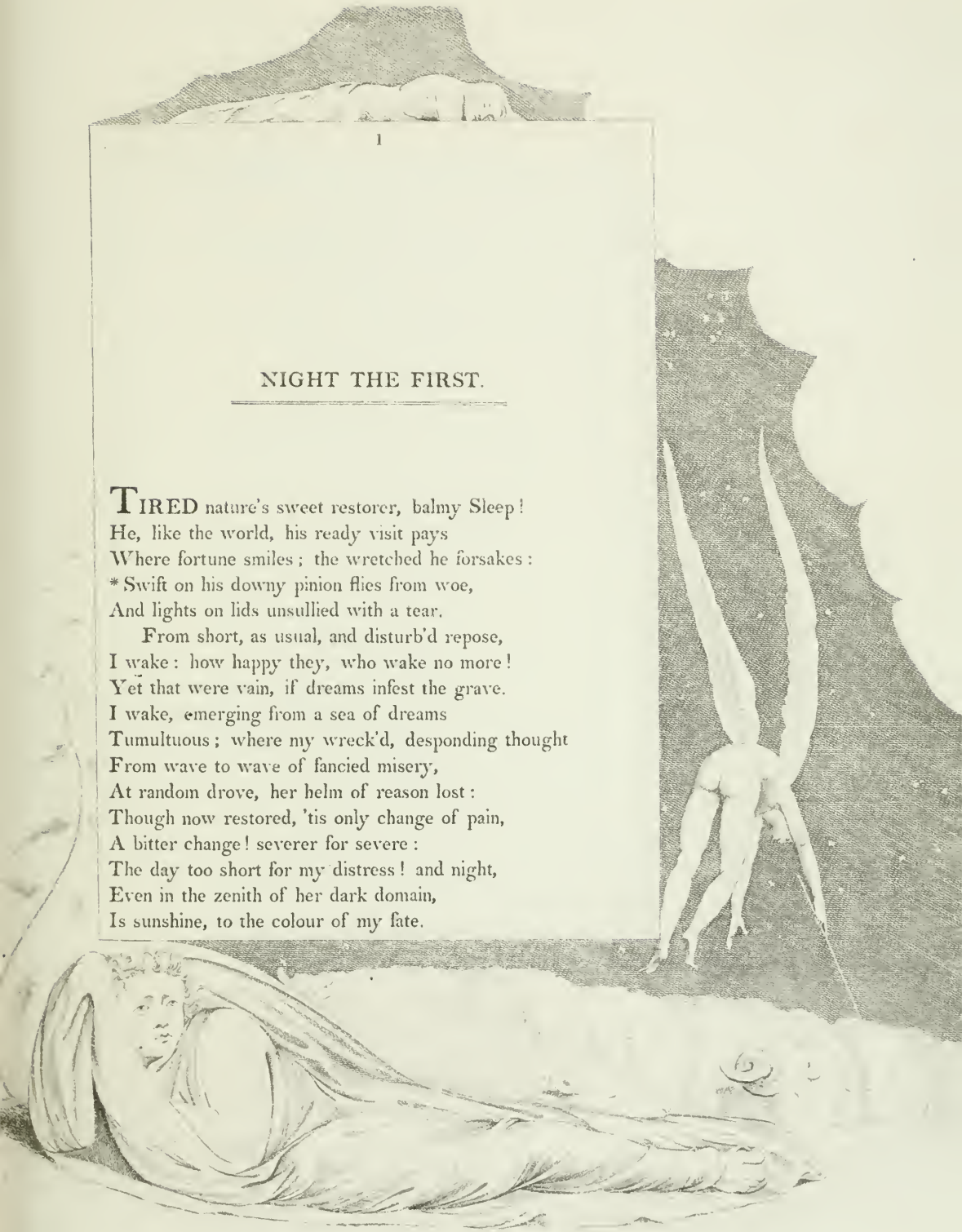
Page 33. Belshazzar terrified in the midst of his impious debauch by the hand-writing on the wall. The passage marked out by the asterisk, sufficiently explains the propriety with which the story is alluded to by the poet, and delineated by the artist.

Page 35. A parent communicating instruction to his family.

Page 37. The story of the good Samaritan, introduced by the artist as an illustration of the poet's sentiment, that love alone and kind offices can purchase love.

Page 40. Angels attending the death-bed of the righteous, and administering consolation to his last moments.

Page 41. Angels conveying the spirit of the good man to heaven.



NIGHT THE FIRST.

TIRED nature's sweet restorer, balmy Sleep!
He, like the world, his ready visit pays
Where fortune smiles; the wretched he forsakes:
* Swift on his downy pinion flies from woe,
And lights on lids unsullied with a tear.
From short, as usual, and disturb'd repose,
I wake: how happy they, who wake no more!
Yet that were vain, if dreams infest the grave.
I wake, emerging from a sea of dreams
Tumultuous; where my wreck'd, desponding thought
From wave to wave of fancied misery,
At random drove, her helm of reason lost:
Though now restored, 'tis only change of pain,
A bitter change! severer for severe:
The day too short for my distress! and night,
Even in the zenith of her dark domain,
Is sunshine, to the colour of my fate.

Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty, now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumb'ring world:
Silence, how dead! and darkness, how profound!
Nor eye, nor list'ning ear an object finds;
Creation sleeps. 'Tis, as the general pulse
Of life stood still, and nature made a pause;
An awful pause! prophetick of her end.
And let her prophecy be soon fulfill'd;
Fate! drop the curtain; I can lose no more.
Silence, and Darkness! solemn sisters! twins
From ancient night, who nurse the tender thought
To reason, and on reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man,
Assist me: I will thank you in the grave—
The grave, your kingdom: there this frame shall fall
A victim sacred to your dreary shrine:
But what are ye? THOU, who didst put to flight
Primeval silence, when the morning stars,
Exulting, shouted o'er the rising ball;
O THOU! whose word from solid darkness struck
That spark, the sun; strike wisdom from my soul—
My soul, which flies to THEE, her trust, her treasure,
As misers to their gold, while others rest.
Through this opaque of nature, and of soul,
This double night, transmit one pitying ray,
To lighten, and to cheer: O lead my mind,
A mind that fain would wander from its woe,
Lead it through various scenes of life, and death;
And from each scene, the noblest truths inspire:

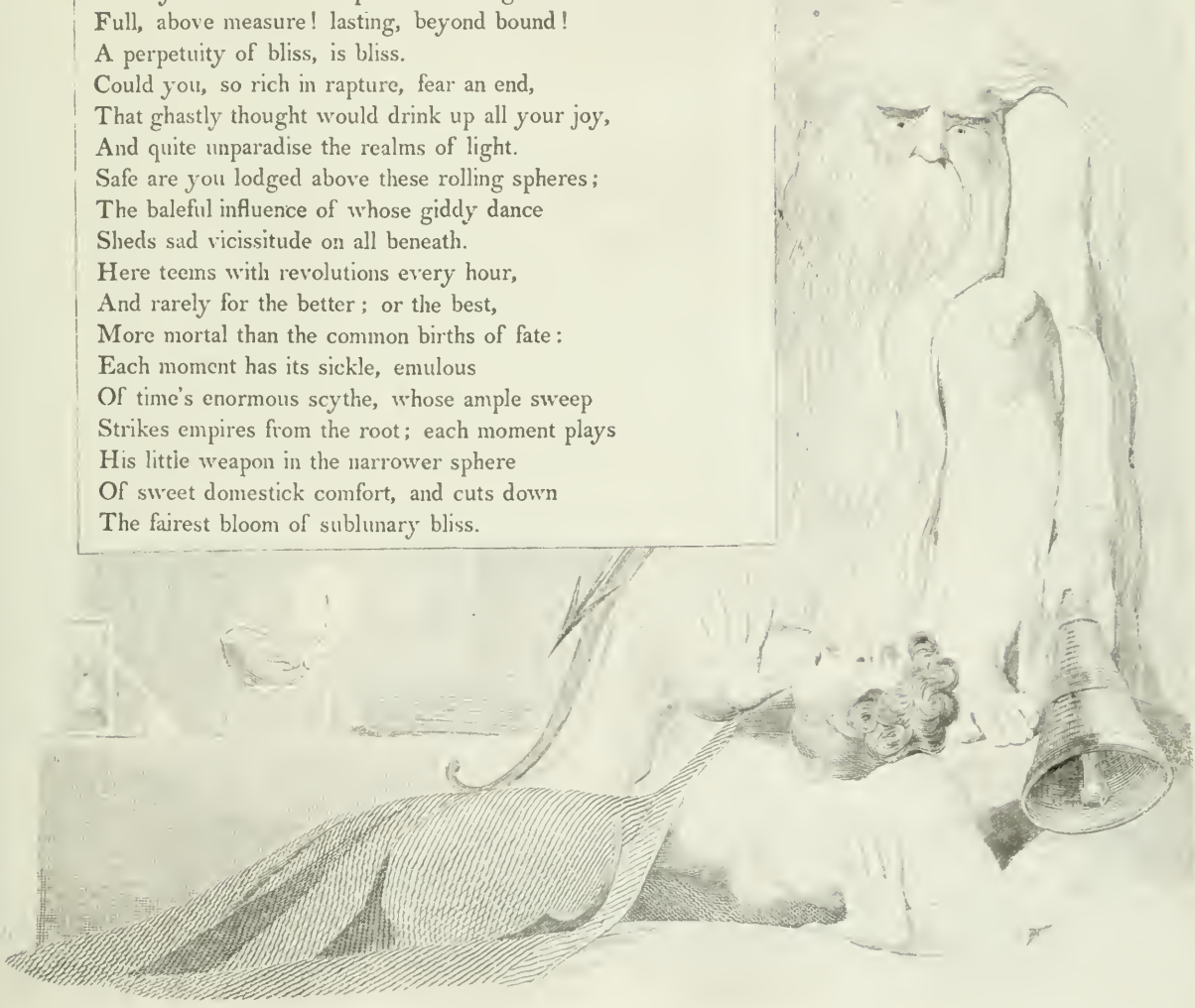
Nor less inspire my conduct, than my song;
Teach my best reason, reason; my best will
Teach rectitude; and fix my firm resolve
Wisdom to wed, and pay her long arrear:
Nor let the phial of thy vengeance, pour'd
On this devoted head, be pour'd in vain.
The bell strikes one! We take no note of time,
But from its loss: to give it then a tongue,
Is wise in man. As if an angel spoke,
I feel the solemn sound. If heard aright,
It is the knell of my departed hours:
Where are they? With the years beyond the flood
It is the signal that demands dispatch:
How much is to be done! My hopes and fears
Start up alarm'd, and o'er life's narrow verge
Look down—On what? A fathomless abyss!
A dread eternity! how surely mine!
And can eternity belong to me,
Poor pensioner on the bounties of an hour?
How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man!
How passing wonder HE, who made him such!
Who centred in our make such strange extremes?
From different natures marvellously mix'd,
Connexion exquisite of distant worlds!
Distinguish'd link in being's endless chain!
Midway from nothing to the Deity!
A beam ethereal, sullied, and absorb'd!
Though sullied and dishonour'd, still divine!
Dim miniature of greatness absolute!

An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
Helpless immortal! insect infinite!
A worm! a God!——I tremble at myself,
And in myself am lost! At home a stranger,
Thought wanders up and down, surprised, aghast,
And wond'ring at her own: how reason reels!
O what a miracle to man is man,
Triumphantly distress'd! what joy, what dread!
Alternately transported, and alarm'd!
What can preserve my life? or what destroy?
An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave—
Legions of angels can't confine me there.
'Tis past conjecture: all things rise in proof.
While o'er my limbs sleep's soft dominion spread:
* What, though my soul fantastick measures trod
O'er fairy fields; or mourn'd along the gloom
Of pathless woods; or down the craggy steep
Hurl'd headlong, swam with pain the mantled pool;
Or scaled the cliff; or danced on hollow winds,
With antick shapes wild natives of the brain?
Her ceaseless flight, though devious, speaks her nature
Of subtler essence than the trodden clod;
Active, aërial, tow'ring, unconfined,
Unfetter'd with her gross companion's fall.
Even silent night proclaims my soul immortal;
Even silent night proclaims eternal day.
For human weal, Heaven husbands all events;
Dull sleep instructs, nor sport vain dreams in vain.
Why then their loss deplore that are not lost?
Why wanders wretched thought their tombs around,

In infidel distress? Are angels there?
Slumbers, raked up in dust, ethereal fire?
They live! they greatly live a life on earth
Unkindled, unconceived! and from an eye
Of tenderness, let heavenly pity fall
On me, more justly number'd with the dead.
This is the desart, this the solitude:
How populous, how vital, is the grave!
This is creation's melancholy vault,
The vale funereal, the sad cypress gloom;
The land of apparitions, empty shades!
All, all on earth is shadow, all beyond
Is substance: the reverse is folly's creed:
How solid all, where change shall be no more!
This is the bud of being, the dim dawn,
The twilight of our day, the vestibule;
Life's theatre as yet is shut, and death,
Strong death alone can heave the massy bar,
This gross impediment of clay remove,
And make us, embryos of existence, free.
From real life, but little more remote
Is he, not yet a candidate for light,
The future embryo, slumb'ring in his sire:
Embryos we must be, till we burst the shell,
Yon ambient azure shell, and spring to life,
The life of gods, O transport! and of man.
Yet man, fool man! here buries all his thoughts;
Inters celestial hopes without one sigh:
Pris'ner of earth, and pent beneath the moon,
Here pinions all his wishes; wing'd by heaven

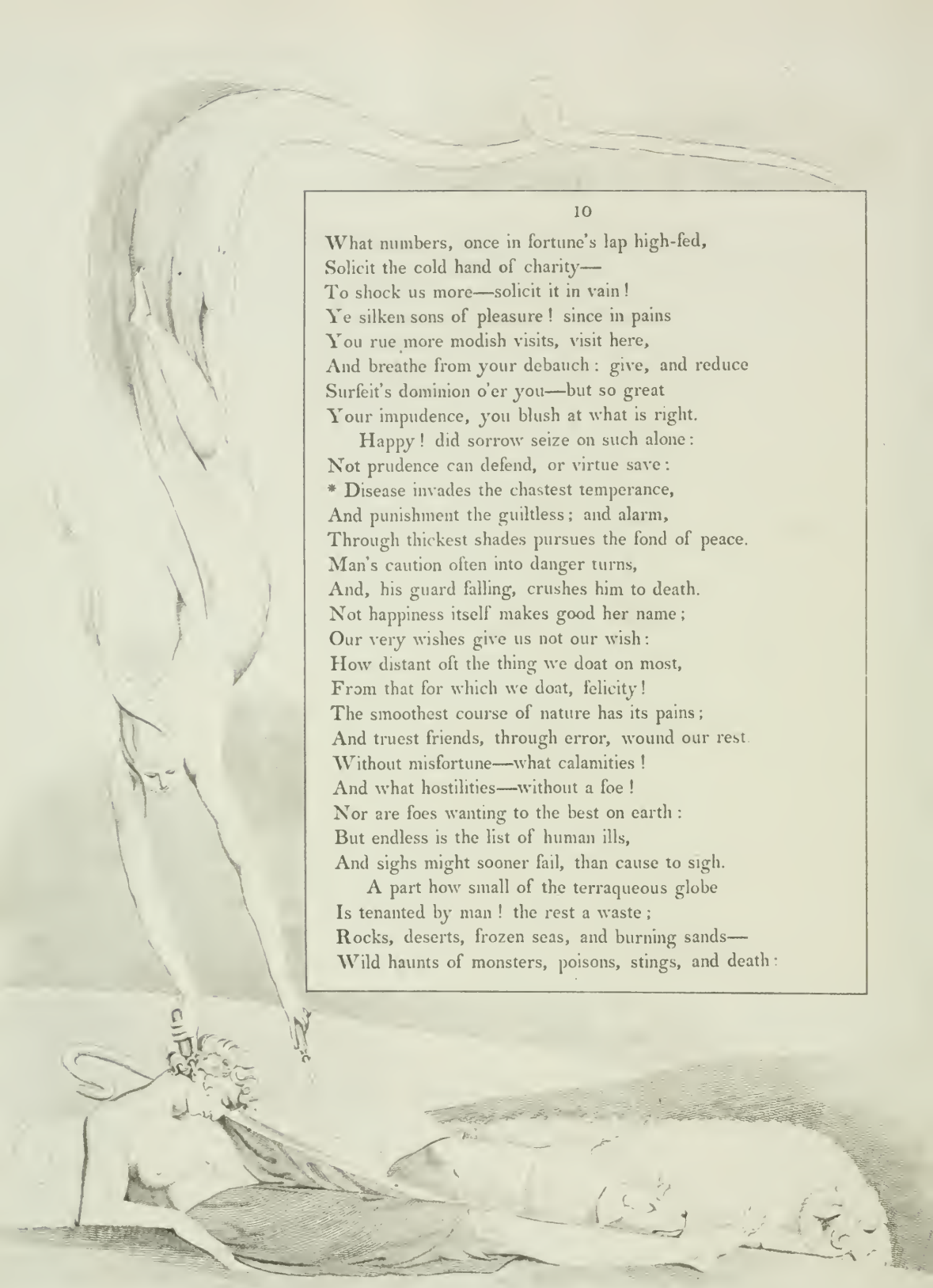
To fly at infinite; and reach it there,
Where seraphs gather immortality
On life's fair tree, fast by the throne of GOD.
What golden joys ambrosial clust'ring glow
In HIS full beam, and ripen for the just—
Where momentary ages are no more!
Where time, and pain, and chance, and death expire!
And is it in the flight of threescore years,
To push eternity from human thought,
And smother souls immortal in the dust?
A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness,
Thrown into tumult, raptured, or alarm'd
At aught this scene can threaten, or indulge,
Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly.
Where falls this censure? It o'erwhelms myself:
How was my heart incrusted by the world!
O how self-fetter'd was my groveling soul!
How, like a worm, was I wrapt round and round
In silken thought, which reptile fancy spun;
Till darken'd reason lay quite clouded o'er
With soft conceit of endless comfort here,
Nor yet put forth her wings to reach the skies!
Night-visions may befriend, as sung above:
Our waking dreams are fatal: how I dreamt
Of things impossible! could sleep do more?
Of joys perpetual in perpetual change!
Of stable pleasures on the tossing wave!
Eternal sunshine in the storms of life!

How richly were my noontide trances hung
With gorgeous tapestries of pictured joys,
Joy behind joy, in endless perspective!
* Till at Death's toll, whose restless iron tongue
Calls daily for his millions at a meal,
Starting I 'woke, and found myself undone.
Where's now my frenzy's pompous furniture?
The cobweb'd cottage, with its ragged wall
Of mould'ring mud, is royalty to me:
The spider's most attenuated thread,
Is cord, is cable, to man's tender tie
On earthly bliss; it breaks at every breeze.
O ye blest scenes of permanent delight!
Full, above measure! lasting, beyond bound!
A perpetuity of bliss, is bliss.
Could you, so rich in rapture, fear an end,
That ghastly thought would drink up all your joy,
And quite unparadise the realms of light.
Safe are you lodged above these rolling spheres;
The baleful influence of whose giddy dance
Sheds sad vicissitude on all beneath.
Here teems with revolutions every hour,
And rarely for the better; or the best,
More mortal than the common births of fate:
Each moment has its sickle, emulous
Of time's enormous scythe, whose ample sweep
Strikes empires from the root; each moment plays
His little weapon in the narrower sphere
Of sweet domestick comfort, and cuts down
The fairest bloom of sublunary bliss.



Bliss! sublunary bliss!—proud words, and vain!
Implicit treason to divine decree!
A bold invasion of the rights of heaven!
I clasp'd the phantoms, and I found them air:
O had I weigh'd it ere my fond embrace,
What darts of agony had miss'd my heart!
* Death! great proprietor of all! 'tis thine
To tread out empire, and to quench the stars:
The sun himself by thy permission shines;
And, one day, thou shalt pluck him from his sphere.
Amidst such mighty plunder, why exhaust
Thy partial quiver on a mark so mean?
Why thy peculiar rancour wreak'd on me?
Insatiate archer! could not one suffice?
Thy shaft flew thrice—and thrice my peace was slain;
And thrice, ere thrice yon moon had fill'd her horn.
O Cynthia! why so pale? dost thou lament
Thy wretched neighbour? grieve to see thy wheel
Of ceaseless change outwhirl'd in human life?
How wanes my borrow'd bliss from fortune's smile!
Precarious courtesy! not virtue's sure,
Self-given, solar ray of sound delight.
In every varied posture, place, and hour,
How widow'd every thought of every joy!
Thought, busy thought! too busy for my peace,
Through the dark postern of time long elapsed,
Led softly; by the stillness of the night,
Led like a murderer, and such it proves;
Strays, wretched rover! o'er the pleasing past;
In quest of wretchedness perversely strays;

And finds all desert now; and meets the ghosts
Of my departed joys, a numerous train!
I rue the riches of my former fate:
Sweet comfort's blasted clusters I lament:
I tremble at the blessings once so dear;
And every pleasure pains me to the heart.
Yet why complain? or why complain for one?
Hangs out the sun his lustre but for me,
The single man? are angels all beside?
I mourn for millions—'tis the common lot:
In this shape, or in that, has fate entail'd
The mother's throes on all of woman born,
Not more the children, than sure heirs of pain.
War, famine, pest, volcano, storm, and fire,
Intestine broils, oppression, with her heart
Wrapp'd up in triple brass, besiege mankind.
GOD's image, disinherited of day,
Here, plunged in mines, forgets a sun was made;
There, beings, deathless as their haughty lord,
Are hammer'd to the galling oar for life;
And plough the winter's wave, and reap despair:
Some, for hard masters broken under arms,
In battle lopp'd away, with half their limbs
Beg bitter bread through realms their valour saved,
If so the tyrant, or his minions doom.
Want and incurable disease, fell pair!
On hopeless multitudes remorseless seize
At once; and make a refuge of the grave:
How groaning hospitals eject their dead!
What numbers groan for sad admission there!



What numbers, once in fortune's lap high-fed,
Solicit the cold hand of charity—
To shock us more—solicit it in vain!
Ye silken sons of pleasure! since in pains
You rue more modish visits, visit here,
And breathe from your debauch: give, and reduce
Surfeit's dominion o'er you—but so great
Your impudence, you blush at what is right.
    Happy! did sorrow seize on such alone:
Not prudence can defend, or virtue save:
* Disease invades the chastest temperance,
And punishment the guiltless; and alarm,
Through thickest shades pursues the fond of peace.
Man's caution often into danger turns,
And, his guard falling, crushes him to death.
Not happiness itself makes good her name;
Our very wishes give us not our wish:
How distant oft the thing we doat on most,
From that for which we doat, felicity!
The smoothest course of nature has its pains;
And truest friends, through error, wound our rest.
Without misfortune—what calamities!
And what hostilities—without a foe!
Nor are foes wanting to the best on earth:
But endless is the list of human ills,
And sighs might sooner fail, than cause to sigh.
    A part how small of the terraqueous globe
Is tenanted by man! the rest a waste;
Rocks, deserts, frozen seas, and burning sands—
Wild haunts of monsters, poisons, stings, and death:

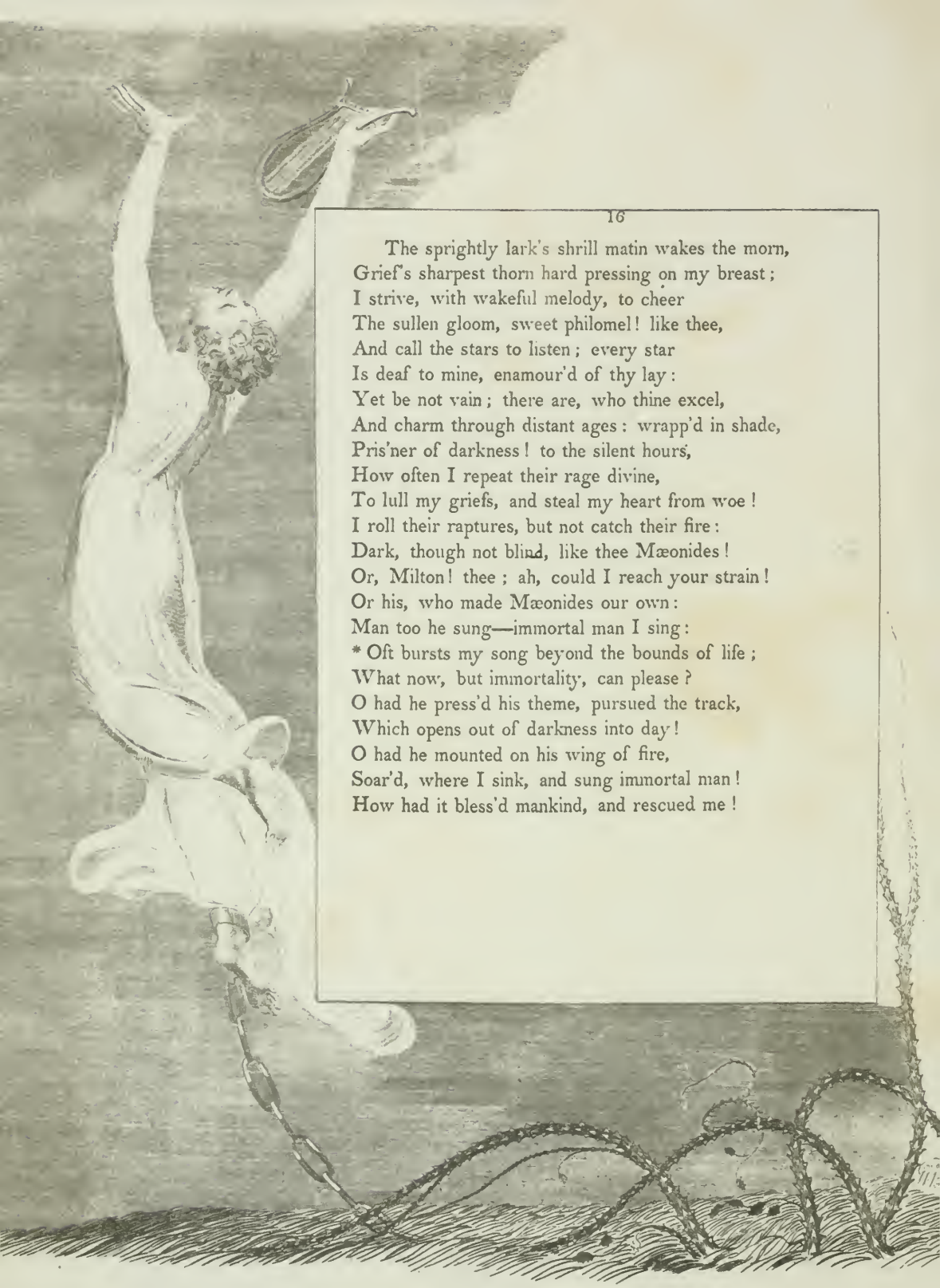
Such is earth's melancholy map! but, far
More sad, this earth is a true map of man:
So bounded are its haughty lord's delights
To woe's wide empire; where deep troubles toss,
Loud sorrows howl, envenom'd passions bite,
Ravenous calamities our vitals seize,
And threatening fate wide opens to devour.
What then am I, who sorrow for myself?
In age, in infancy, from others aid
Is all our hope—to teach us to be kind—
That, nature's first, last lesson to mankind:
The selfish heart deserves the pain it feels;
More generous sorrow, while it sinks, exalts;
And conscious virtue mitigates the pang:
Nor virtue, more than prudence, bids me give
Swoln thought a second channel; who divide,
They weaken too the torrent of their grief.
Take then, O world! thy much-indebted tear:
How sad a sight is human happiness
To those, whose thought can pierce beyond an hour!
O thou! whate'er thou art, whose heart exults!
Wouldst thou I should congratulate thy fate?
I know thou wouldst; thy pride demands it from me:
Let thy pride pardon, what thy nature needs—
The salutary censure of a friend.
Thou happy wretch! by blindness thou art blest;
By dotage dandled to perpetual smiles:
Know, smiler, at thy peril art thou pleased;
Thy pleasure is the promise of thy pain:
Misfortune, like a creditor severe,

But rises in demand for her delay;
She makes a scourge of past prosperity
To sting thee more, and double thy distress.
Lorenzo, fortune makes her court to thee;
Thy fond heart dances, while the syren sings:
Dear is thy welfare; think me not unkind,
I would not damp, but to secure thy joys:
Think not that fear is sacred to the storm;
Stand on thy guard against the smiles of fate.
Is heaven tremendous in its frowns? most sure—
And in its favours formidable too:
* Its favours here are trials, not rewards;
A call to duty, not discharge from care;
And should alarm us, full as much as woes;
Awake us to their cause and consequence;
And make us tremble, weigh'd with our desert.
Awe nature's tumults, and chastise her joys,
Lest, while we clasp, we kill them; nay, invert
To worse than simple misery their charms:
Revolted joys, like foes in civil war,
Like bosom friendships to resentment sour'd,
With rage envenom'd rise against our peace.
Beware what earth calls happiness; beware
All joys, but joys that never can expire:
Who builds on less than an immortal base,
Fond as he seems, condemns his joys to death.
Mine died with thee, Philander! thy last sigh
Dissolved the charm; the disenchanted earth
Lost all her lustre: where her glitt'ring towers?
Her golden mountains where?—all darken'd down

To naked waste; a dreary vale of tears:
The great magician's dead! thou poor pale piece
Of outcast earth—in darkness! what a change
From yesterday! thy darling hope so near,
Long-labour'd prize, O how ambition flush'd
Thy glowing cheek! ambition, truly great,
Of virtuous praise: death's subtle seed within,
Sly, treacherous miner! working in the dark,
Smiled at thy well-concerted scheme, and beckon'd
The worm to riot on that rose so red,
Unfaded ere it fell—one moment's prey!
Man's foresight is conditionally wise;
Lorenzo! wisdom into folly turns
Oft, the first instant its idea fair
To lab'ring thought is born: how dim our eye!
* The present moment terminates our sight;
Clouds, thick as those on doomsday, drown the next;
We penetrate, we prophesy in vain:
Time is dealt out by particles; and each,
Ere mingled with the streaming sands of life,
By fate's inviolable oath is sworn
Deep silence, "where eternity begins."
By nature's law, what may be, may be now;
There's no prerogative in human hours:
In human hearts what bolder thought can rise,
Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn?
Where is to-morrow?—in another world!
For numbers this is certain; the reverse
Is sure to none; and yet on this perhaps,
This peradventure—infamous for lies,

As on a rock of adamant we build
Our mountain hopes ; spin our eternal schemes,
As we the fatal sisters would outspin,
And, big with life's futurities, expire.
Not even PHILANDER had bespoke his shroud,
Nor had he cause ; a warning was denied :
How many fall as sudden—not as safe !
As sudden, though for years admonish'd home.
Of human ills the last extreme beware,
Beware, LORENZO ! a slow-sudden death :
How dreadful that deliberate surprise !
Be wise to-day, 'tis madness to defer ;
Next day the fatal precedent will plead ;
Thus on, till wisdom is push'd out of life :
Procrastination is the thief of time ;
Year after year it steals, till all are fled ;
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene :
If not so frequent, would not this be strange ?
That 'tis so frequent, this is stranger still.
Of man's miraculous mistakes, this bears
The palm, " That all men are about to live"—
For ever on the brink of being born.
All pay themselves the compliment to think
They one day shall not drivel ; and their pride
On this reversion takes up ready praise,
At least their own, their future selves applauds :
How excellent that life they ne'er will lead !
Time lodged in their own hands is folly's veils ;
That lodged in fate's, to wisdom they consign ;

The thing they can't but purpose, they postpone:
'Tis not in folly, not to scorn a fool;
And scarce in human wisdom to do more:
All promise is poor dilatory man,
And that through every stage: when young, indeed,
In full content we sometimes nobly rest,
Unanxious for ourselves; and only wish,
As duteous sons, our fathers were more wise:
At thirty man suspects himself a fool;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan;
At fifty chides his infamous delay,
Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve;
In all the magnanimity of thought
Resolves, and re-resolves; then dies the same.
And why? because he thinks himself immortal:
All men think all men mortal, but themselves;
Themselves;—when some alarming shock of fate
Strikes through their wounded hearts the sudden dread;
But their hearts wounded, like the wounded air,
Soon close; where pass'd the shaft no trace is found.
As from the wing no scar the sky retains;
The parted wave no furrow from the keel;
So dies in human hearts the thought of death:
Even with the tender tear which nature sheds
O'er those we love, we drop it in their grave.
Can I forget PHILANDER? that were strange:
O my full heart!—but should I give it vent,
* The longest night though longer far, would fail,
And the lark listen to my midnight song.



The sprightly lark's shrill matin wakes the morn,
Grief's sharpest thorn hard pressing on my breast;
I strive, with wakeful melody, to cheer
The sullen gloom, sweet philomel! like thee,
And call the stars to listen; every star
Is deaf to mine, enamour'd of thy lay:
Yet be not vain; there are, who thine excel,
And charm through distant ages: wrapp'd in shade,
Pris'ner of darkness! to the silent hours,
How often I repeat their rage divine,
To lull my griefs, and steal my heart from woe!
I roll their raptures, but not catch their fire:
Dark, though not blind, like thee Mæonides!
Or, Milton! thee; ah, could I reach your strain!
Or his, who made Mæonides our own:
Man too he sung—immortal man I sing:
* Oft bursts my song beyond the bounds of life;
What now, but immortality, can please?
O had he press'd his theme, pursued the track,
Which opens out of darkness into day!
O had he mounted on his wing of fire,
Soar'd, where I sink, and sung immortal man!
How had it bless'd mankind, and rescued me!

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NIGHT the SECOND

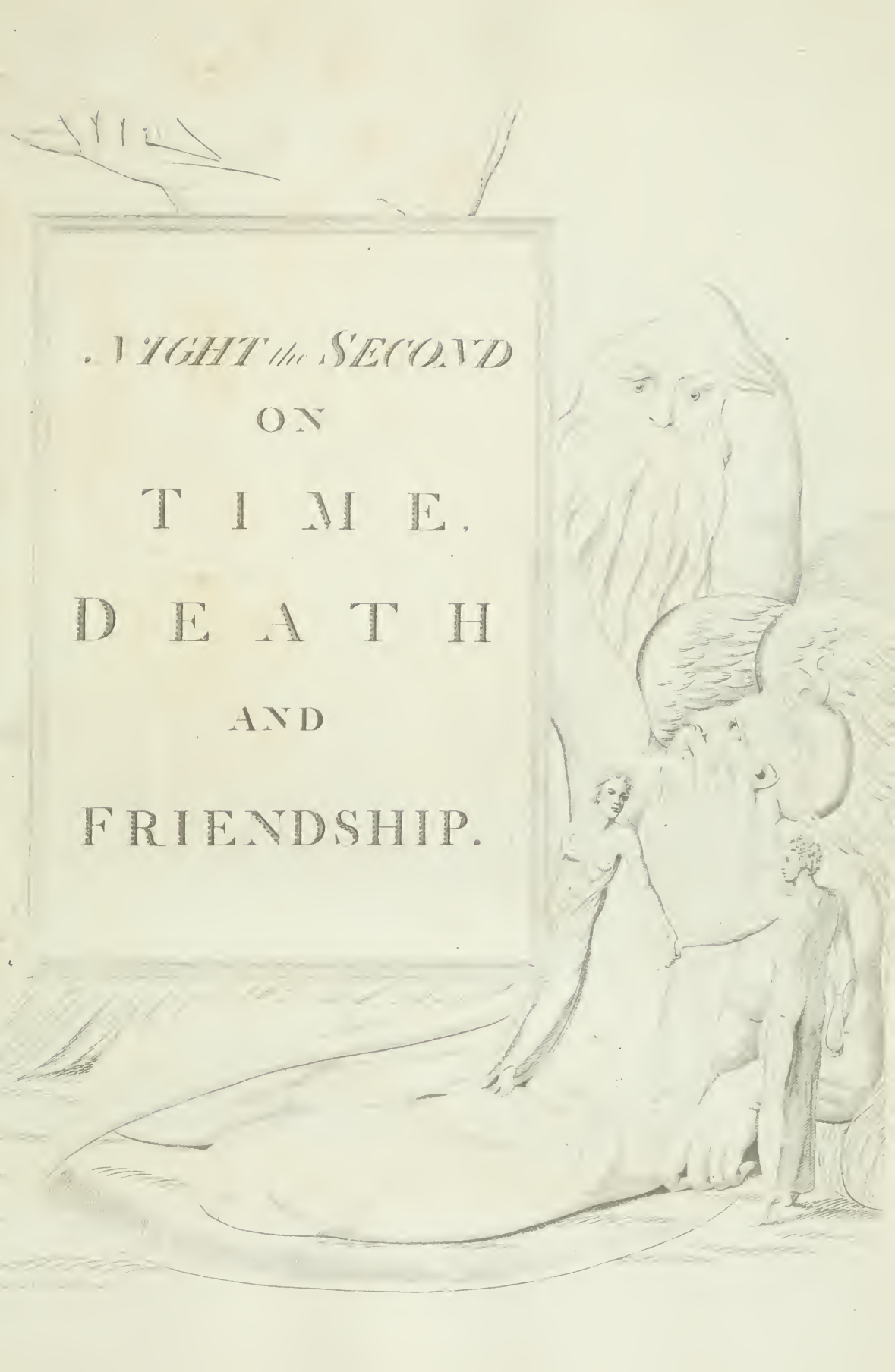
ON

TIME,

DEATH

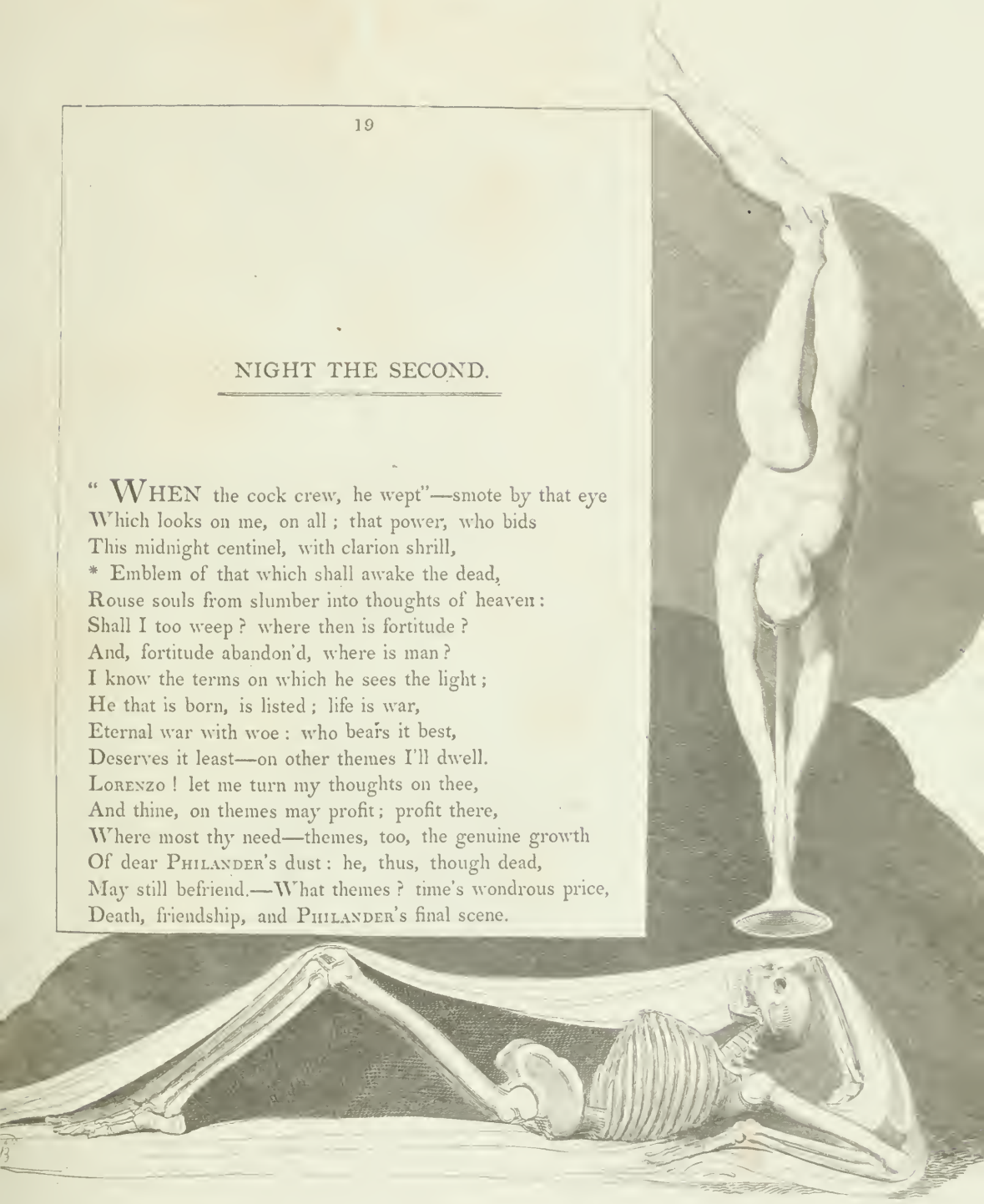
AND

FRIENDSHIP.



NIGHT THE SECOND.

" WHEN the cock crew, he wept"—smote by that eye
Which looks on me, on all; that power, who bids
This midnight centinel, with clarion shrill,
* Emblem of that which shall awake the dead,
Rouse souls from slumber into thoughts of heaven:
Shall I too weep? where then is fortitude?
And, fortitude abandon'd, where is man?
I know the terms on which he sees the light;
He that is born, is listed; life is war,
Eternal war with woe: who bears it best,
Deserves it least—on other themes I'll dwell.
LORENZO! let me turn my thoughts on thee,
And thine, on themes may profit; profit there,
Where most thy need—themes, too, the genuine growth
Of dear PHILANDER's dust: he, thus, though dead,
May still befriend.—What themes? time's wondrous price,
Death, friendship, and PHILANDER's final scene.



So could I touch these themes, as might obtain
Thine ear, nor leave thy heart quite disengaged,
The good deed would delight me; half impress
On my dark cloud an iris; and from grief
Call glory:—dost thou mourn PHILANDER's fate?
* I know thou say'st it: says thy life the same?
He mourns the dead, who lives as they desire.
Where is that thrift, that avarice of time,
O glorious avarice! thought of death inspires,
As rumour'd robberies endear our gold?
O time! than gold more sacred; more a load
Than lead, to fools; and fools reputed wise:
What moment granted man without account?
What years are squander'd, wisdom's debt unpaid!
Our wealth in days all due to that discharge.
Haste, haste, he lies in wait, he's at the door,
Insidious death! should his strong hand arrest,
No composition sets the pris'ner free;
Eternity's inexorable chain
Fast binds, and vengeance claims the full arrear.

How late I shudder'd on the brink! how late
Life call'd for her last refuge in despair!
That time is mine, O MEAD! to thee I owe;
Fain would I pay thee with eternity:
But ill my genius answers my desire;
My sickly song is mortal, past thy cure:
Accept the will—that dies not with my strain.

For what calls thy disease, LORENZO? not
For esculapian, but for moral aid:
Thou think'st it folly to be wise too soon.

Youth is not rich in time; it may be, poor;
Part with it as with money—sparing; pay
No moment but in purchase of its worth;
And what its worth, ask death-beds; they can tell:
Part with it as with life—reluctant; big
With holy hope of nobler time to come;
Time higher aim'd, still nearer the great mark
Of men and angels—virtue more divine.

Is this our duty, wisdom, glory, gain?
These Heaven benign in vital union binds;
And sport we like the natives of the bough,
When vernal suns inspire? amusement reigns
Man's great demand; to trifle is to live:
And is it then a trifle too—to die?

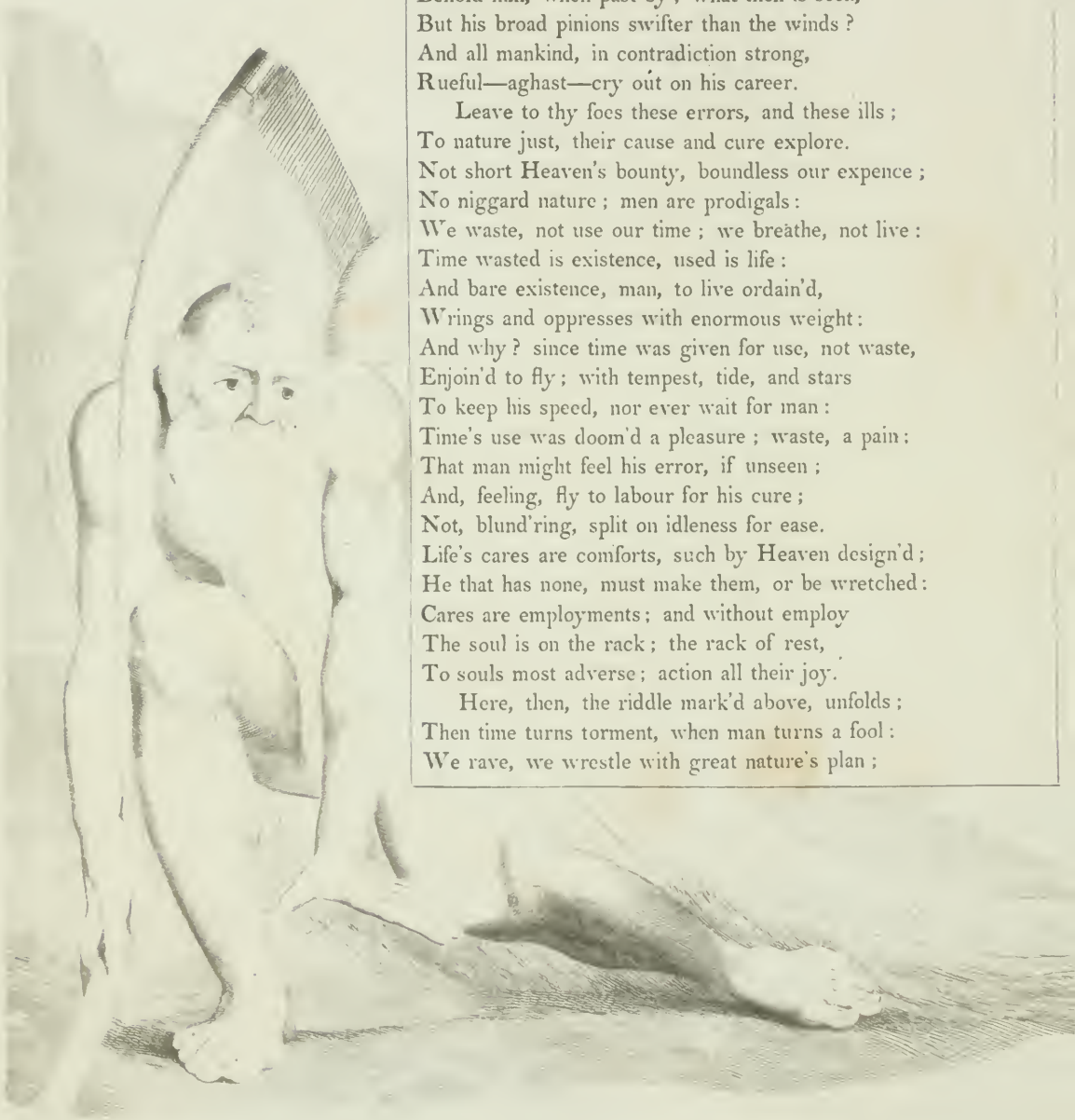
Thou say'st I preach, Lorenzo! 'tis confess'd:
What, if for once I preach thee quite awake?
Who wants amusement in the flame of battle?
Is it not treason to the soul immortal,
Her foes in arms, eternity the prize?
Will toys amuse, when med'cines cannot cure?
When spirits ebb, when life's enchanting scenes
Their lustre lose, and lessen in our sight,
As lands and cities with their glitt'ring spires,
To the poor shatter'd bark, by sudden storm
Thrown off to sea, and soon to perish there;
Will toys amuse?—No: thrones will then be toys,
And earth and skies seem dust upon the scale.

Redeem we time?—Its loss we dearly buy:
What pleads Lorenzo for his high-prized sports?
He pleads time's numerous blanks; he loudly pleads

The straw-like trifles on life's common stream:
From whom those blanks and trifles, but from thee?
No blank, no trifle nature made, or meant.
Virtue, or purposed virtue, still be thine;
This cancels thy complaint at once, this leaves
In act no trifle, and no blank in time;
This greatens, fills, immortalizes all;
This, the blest art of turning all to gold;
This, the good heart's prerogative to raise
A royal tribute from the poorest hours:
Immense revenue! every moment pays.
If nothing more than purpose in thy power;
Thy purpose firm, is equal to the deed:
Who does the best his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly;—angels could no more.
Our outward act, indeed, admits restraint:
'Tis not in things o'er thought to domineer;
Guard well thy thought; our thoughts are heard in heaven.
On all-important time, through every age,
Though much, and warm, the wise have urged; the man
Is yet unborn, who duly weighs an hour.
"I've lost a day"—the prince who nobly cried,
Had been an emperor without his crown—
Of Rome? say rather, lord of human race;
He spoke, as if deputed by mankind:
So should all speak; so reason speaks in all:
From the soft whispers of that God in man,
Why fly to folly, why to frenzy fly,
For rescue from the blessings we possess?
Time, the supreme!—Time is eternity;

Pregnant with all eternity can give ;
Pregnant with all that makes archangels smile :
Who murders time, he crushes in the birth
A power ethereal, only not adored.
    Ah ! how unjust to nature and himself,
Is thoughtless, thankless, inconsistent man !
Like children babbling nonsense in their sports,
* We censure nature for a span too short ;
That span too short, we tax as tedious too ;
Torture invention, all expedients tire,
To lash the ling'ring moments into speed,
And whirl us, happy riddance ! from ourselves.
Art, brainless art ! our furious charioteer,
For nature's voice unstifled would recall,
Drives headlong tow'rds the precipice of death—
Death, most our dread ; death thus more dreadful made
O what a riddle of absurdity !
Leisure is pain ; take off our chariot-wheels,
How heavily we drag the load of life !
Blest leisure is our curse ; like that of Cain,
It makes us wander ; wander earth around
To fly that tyrant, thought. As Atlas groan'd
The world beneath, we groan beneath an hour :
We cry for mercy to the next amusement ;
The next amusement mortgages our fields—
Slight inconvenience ! prisons hardly frown—
From hateful time if prisons set us free ;
Yet when death kindly tenders us relief,
We call him cruel ; years to moments shrink,
Ages to years : the telescope is turn'd,

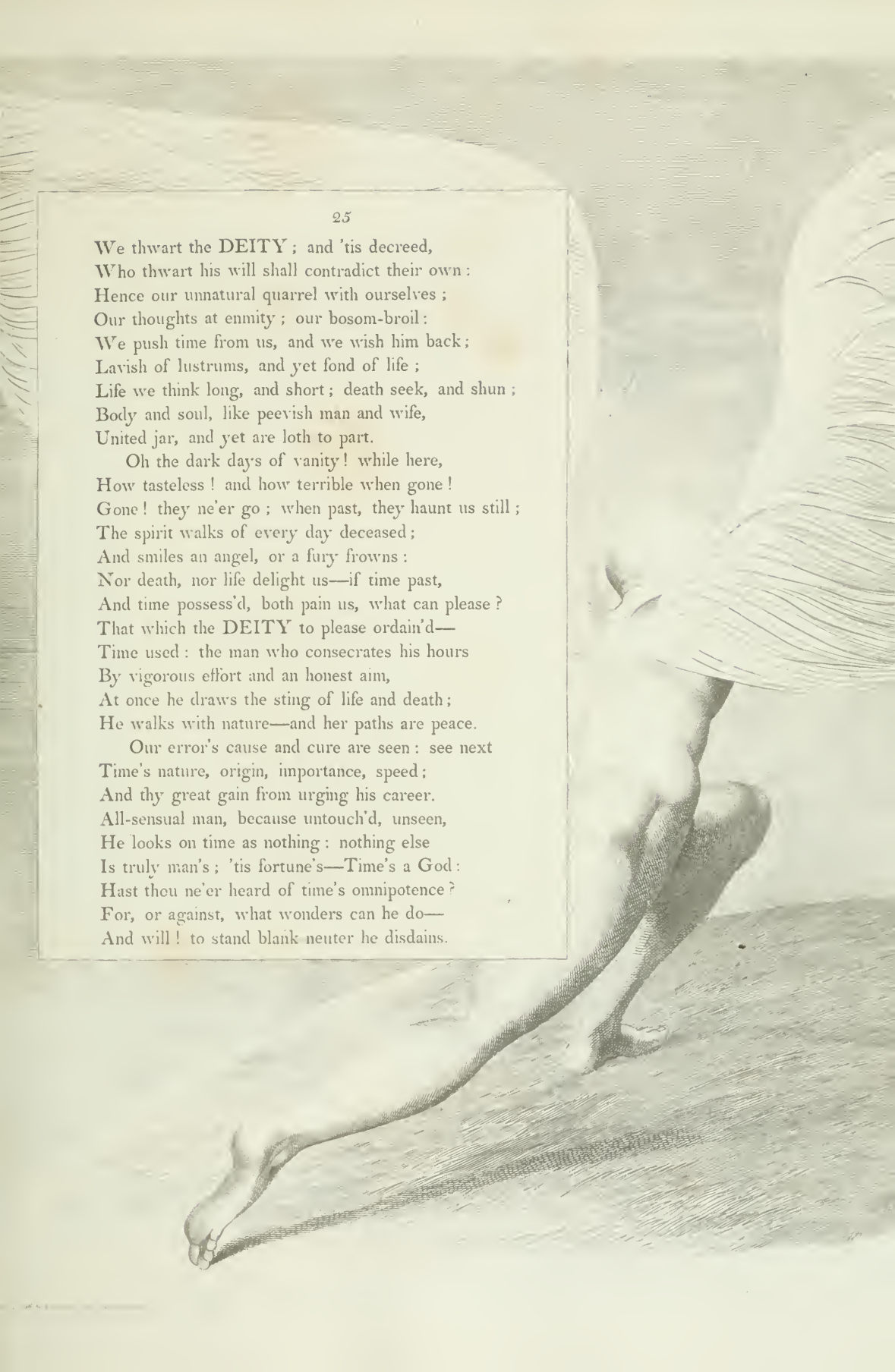
To man's false opticks, from his folly false,
* Time, in advance, behind him hides his wings,
And seems to creep decrepit with his age:
Behold him, when past by; what then is seen,
But his broad pinions swifter than the winds?
And all mankind, in contradiction strong,
Rueful—aghast—cry out on his career.
Leave to thy foes these errors, and these ills;
To nature just, their cause and cure explore.
Not short Heaven's bounty, boundless our expence;
No niggard nature; men are prodigals:
We waste, not use our time; we breathe, not live:
Time wasted is existence, used is life:
And bare existence, man, to live ordain'd,
Wrings and oppresses with enormous weight:
And why? since time was given for use, not waste,
Enjoin'd to fly; with tempest, tide, and stars
To keep his speed, nor ever wait for man:
Time's use was doom'd a pleasure; waste, a pain:
That man might feel his error, if unseen;
And, feeling, fly to labour for his cure;
Not, blund'ring, split on idleness for ease.
Life's cares are comforts, such by Heaven design'd;
He that has none, must make them, or be wretched:
Cares are employments; and without employ
The soul is on the rack; the rack of rest,
To souls most adverse; action all their joy.
Here, then, the riddle mark'd above, unfolds;
Then time turns torment, when man turns a fool:
We rave, we wrestle with great nature's plan;



We thwart the DEITY; and 'tis decreed,
Who thwart his will shall contradict their own:
Hence our unnatural quarrel with ourselves;
Our thoughts at enmity; our bosom-broil:
We push time from us, and we wish him back;
Lavish of lustrums, and yet fond of life;
Life we think long, and short; death seek, and shun;
Body and soul, like peevish man and wife,
United jar, and yet are loth to part.

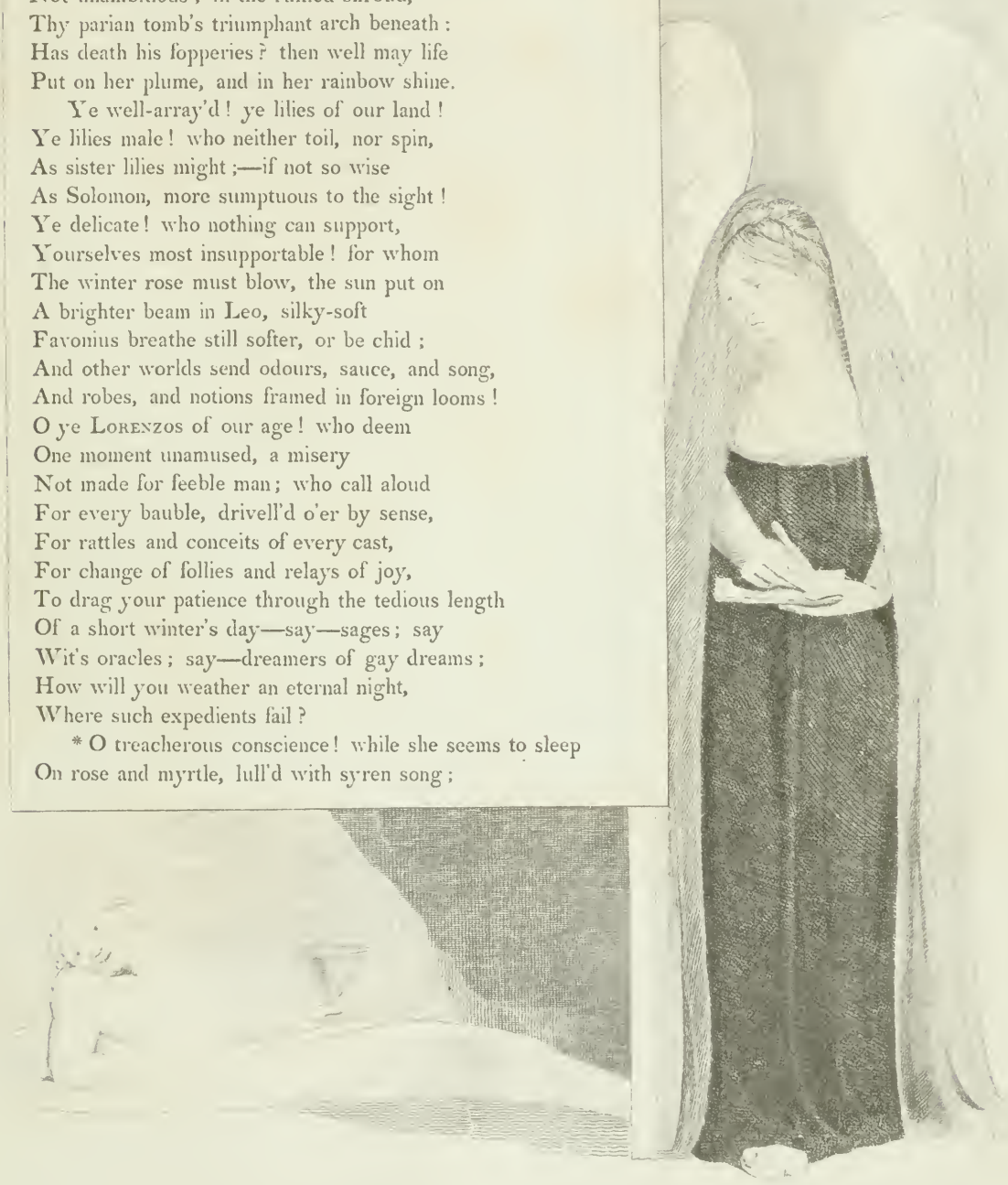
Oh the dark days of vanity! while here,
How tasteless! and how terrible when gone!
Gone! they ne'er go; when past, they haunt us still;
The spirit walks of every day deceased;
And smiles an angel, or a fury frowns:
Nor death, nor life delight us—if time past,
And time possess'd, both pain us, what can please?
That which the DEITY to please ordain'd—
Time used: the man who consecrates his hours
By vigorous effort and an honest aim,
At once he draws the sting of life and death;
He walks with nature—and her paths are peace.

Our error's cause and cure are seen: see next
Time's nature, origin, importance, speed;
And thy great gain from urging his career.
All-sensual man, because untouch'd, unseen,
He looks on time as nothing: nothing else
Is truly man's; 'tis fortune's—Time's a God:
Hast thou ne'er heard of time's omnipotence?
For, or against, what wonders can he do—
And will! to stand blank neuter he disdains.



Not on those terms was time, heaven's stranger, sent
On his important embassy to man.
Lorenzo! no: on the long-destined hour,
From everlasting ages growing ripe,
That memorable hour of wondrous birth,
When the DREAD SIRE, on emanation bent,
And big with nature, rising in his might,
Call'd forth creation, for then time was born,
By godhead streaming through a thousand worlds;
Not on those terms, from the great days of heaven,
From old eternity's mysterious orb,
Was time cut off, and cast beneath the skies;
The skies, which watch him in his new abode,
* Measuring his motions by revolving spheres;
That horologe machinery divine:
Hours, days, and months, and years, his children play,
Like numerous wings, around him, as he flies;
Or rather, as unequal plumes they shape
His ample pinions, swift as darted flame,
To gain his goal, to reach his ancient rest,
And join anew eternity his sire;
In his immutability to nest,
When worlds, that count his circles now, unhinged,
Fate the loud signal sounding, headlong rush
To timeless night and chaos, whence they rose.
Why spur the speedy? why with levities
New-wing thy short, short day's too rapid flight?
Know'st thou, or what thou dost, or what is done?
Man flies from time, and time from man, too soon
In sad divorce this double flight must end:

And then, where are we? where, Lorenzo, then
Thy sports—thy pomps?—I grant thee, in a state
Not unambitious; in the ruffled shroud,
Thy parian tomb's triumphant arch beneath:
Has death his fopperies? then well may life
Put on her plume, and in her rainbow shine.
    Ye well-array'd! ye lilies of our land!
Ye lilies male! who neither toil, nor spin,
As sister lilies might;—if not so wise
As Solomon, more sumptuous to the sight!
Ye delicate! who nothing can support,
Yourselves most insupportable! for whom
The winter rose must blow, the sun put on
A brighter beam in Leo, silky-soft
Favonius breathe still softer, or be chid;
And other worlds send odours, sauce, and song,
And robes, and notions framed in foreign looms!
O ye Lorenzos of our age! who deem
One moment unamused, a misery
Not made for feeble man; who call aloud
For every bauble, drivell'd o'er by sense,
For rattles and conceits of every cast,
For change of follies and relays of joy,
To drag your patience through the tedious length
Of a short winter's day—say—sages; say
Wit's oracles; say—dreamers of gay dreams;
How will you weather an eternal night,
Where such expedients fail?
    * O treacherous conscience! while she seems to sleep
On rose and myrtle, lull'd with syren song;



While she seems, nodding o'er her charge, to drop
On headlong appetite the slacken'd rein,
And give us up to licence, unrecall'd,
Unmark'd;—see, from behind her secret stand,
The sly informer minutes every fault,
And her dread diary with horror fills:
Not the gross act alone employs her pen;
She reconnoitres fancy's airy band,
A watchful foe! the formidable spy,
List'ning, o'erhears the whispers of our camp;
Our dawning purposes of heart explores,
And steals our embryos of iniquity.
As all-rapacious usurers conceal
Their doomsday-book from all-consuming heirs,
Thus, with indulgence most severe she treats
Us spendthrifts of inestimable time;
Unnoted, notes each moment misapplied;
In leaves more durable than leaves of brass,
Writes our whole history; which death shall read
In every pale delinquent's private ear,
And judgment publish—publish to more worlds
Than this; and endless age in groans resound.
Lorenzo, such that sleeper in thy breast!
Such is her slumber; and her vengeance such
For slighted counsel;—such thy future peace!
And think'st thou still thou canst be wise too soon?
But why on time so lavish is my song?
On this great theme kind nature keeps a school,
To teach her sons herself: each night we die,
Each morn are born anew: each day—a life!

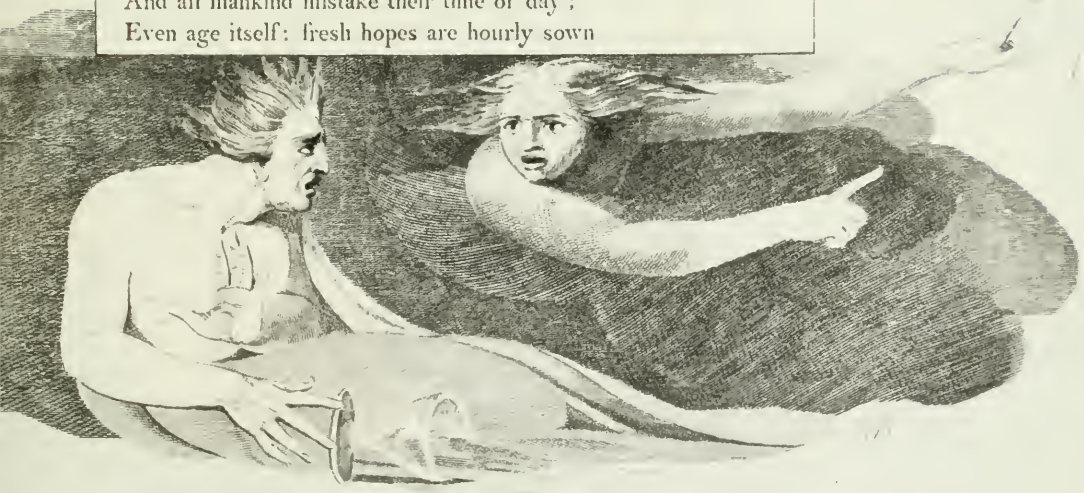
And shall we kill each day? If trifling kills,
Sure vice must butcher: O what heaps of slain
Cry out for vengeance on us! time destroy'd
Is suicide, where more than blood is spilt:
Time flies, death urges, knells call, heaven invites;
Hell threatens: all exerts; in effort, all
More than creation labours!—labours more?
And is there in creation, what, amidst
This tumult universal, wing'd dispatch,
And ardent energy, supinely yawns?—
Man sleeps—and man alone; and man, whose fate—
Fate irreversible, entire, extreme,
Endless, hair-hung, breeze-shaken, o'er the gulph
A moment trembles—drops! and man, for whom
All else is in alarm; man, the sole cause
Of this surrounding storm! and yet he sleeps,
As the storm rock'd to rest.——Throw years away—
Throw empires—and be blameless?—moments seize;
Heaven 's on their wing: a moment we may wish,
When worlds want wealth to buy:—bid day stand still,
Bid him drive back his car, and reimport
The period past, regive the given hour.
Lorenzo, more than miracles we want;
Lorenzo—O for yesterdays to come!
Such is the language of the man awake;
His ardour such, for what oppresses thee:
And is his ardour vain, Lorenzo? no,
That more than miracle the gods indulge;
To-day is yesterday return'd; return'd
Full-power'd to cancel, expiate, raise, adorn,

And reinstate us on the rock of peace.
Let it not share its predecessor s fate;
Nor, like its elder sisters, die a fool:
Shall it evaporate in fume—fly off
Fuliginous, and stain us deeper still?
Shall we be poorer for the plenty pour'd?
More wretched for the clemencies of heaven?
Where shall I find him? angels! tell me where—
You know him: he is near you—point him out:
Shall I see glories beaming from his brow?
Or trace his footsteps by the rising flowers?
Your golden wings, now hov'ring o'er him, shed
Protection; now, are waving in applause
To that blest son of foresight—lord of fate—
That aweful independent on to-morrow!
Whose work is done; who triumphs in the past;
Whose yesterdays look backward with a smile,
Nor, like the Parthian, wound him as they fly;
That common, but opprobrious lot! past hours,
If not by guilt, yet wound us by their flight,
If folly bounds our prospect by the grave,
All feeling of futurity benumb'd;
All god-like passion for eternals quench'd;
All relish of realities expired;
Renounced all correspondence with the skies;
Our freedom chain'd; quite wingless our desire:
In sense dark-prison'd all that ought to soar;
Prone to the centre; crawling in the dust;
Dismounted every great and glorious aim;
Embruted every faculty divine;

Heart-buried in the rubbish of the world—
The world, that gulph of souls, immortal souls,
Souls elevate, angelic, wing'd with fire
To reach the distant skies, and triumph there
On thrones, which shall not mourn their masters changed,
Though we from earth; ethereal, they that fell.
Such veneration due, O man! to man.
Who venerate themselves, the world despise.
For what, gay friend, is this escutcheon'd world,
Which hangs out death in one eternal night?
A night, that glooms us in the noon-tide ray,
And wraps our thought, at banquets, in the shroud.
Life's little stage is a small eminence,
Inch-high the grave above; that home of man,
Where dwells the multitude; we gaze around;
We read their monuments; we sigh; and while
We sigh, we sink; and are what we deplored:
Lamenting, or lamented, all our lot!
Is death at distance? no: he has been on thee;
And given sure earnest of his final blow.
Those hours, which lately smiled, where are they now?
Pallid to thought, and ghastly! drown'd, all drown'd
In that great deep, which nothing disembogues;
And, dying, they bequeath'd thee small renown:
The rest are on the wing; how fleet their flight!
Already has the fatal train took fire;
A moment, and the world's blown up to thee;
The sun is darkness, and the stars are dust.
* 'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,
And ask them, what report they bore to heaven;

And how they might have borne more welcome news:
Their answers form what men experience call;
If wisdom's friend, her best; if not, worst foe.
O reconcile them! kind experience cries,
"There 's nothing here, but what as nothing weighs;
"The more our joy, the more we know it vain;
"And by success are tutor'd to despair."
Nor is it only thus, but must be so:
Who knows not this, though gray, is still a child:
Loose then from earth the grasp of fond desire,
Weigh anchor, and some happier clime explore.
Art thou so moor'd thou canst not disengage,
Nor give thy thoughts a ply to future scenes?
Since, by life's passing breath, blown up from earth,
Light, as the summer's dust, we take in air
A moment's giddy flight, and fall again;
Join the dull mass, increase the trodden soil,
And sleep 'till earth herself shall be no more;
Since then, as emmets, their small world o'erthrown,
We, sore amazed, from out earth's ruins crawl,
And rise to fate extreme of foul or fair,
As man's own choice, controller of the skies!
As man's despotic will, perhaps one hour
O how omnipotent is time! decrees;
Should not each warning give a strong alarm—
Warning, far less than that of bosom torn
From bosom, bleeding o'er the sacred dead?
Should not each dial strike us as we pass,
Portentous, as the written wall which struck,
O'er midnight bowls, the proud Assyrian pale,

Erewhile high-flush'd with insolence and wine?
* Like that, the dial speaks; and points to thee,
Lorenzo! loth to break thy banquet up.
" O man, thy kingdom is departing from thee;
" And, while it lasts, is emptier than my shade."
Its silent language such; nor need'st thou call
Thy magi, to decypher what it means:
Know, like the Median, fate is in thy walls:
Dost ask, how? whence? Belshazzar-like, amazed?
Man's make encloses the sure seeds of death;
Life feeds the murderer: ingrate! he thrives
On her own meal, and then his nurse devours.
    But here, Lorenzo, the delusion lies;
That solar shadow, as it measures life,
It life resembles too: life speeds away
From point to point, though seeming to stand still:
The cunning fugitive is swift by stealth,
Too subtle is the movement to be seen;
Yet soon man's hour is up, and we are gone.
Warnings point out our danger; gnomons, time:
As these are useless when the sun is set;
So those, but when more glorious reason shines:
Reason should judge in all; in reason's eye,
That sedentary shadow travels hard:
But such our gravitation to the wrong,
So prone our hearts to whisper what we wish,
'Tis later with the wise, than he's aware;
A Wilmington goes slower than the sun;
And all mankind mistake their time of day;
Even age itself: fresh hopes are hourly sown

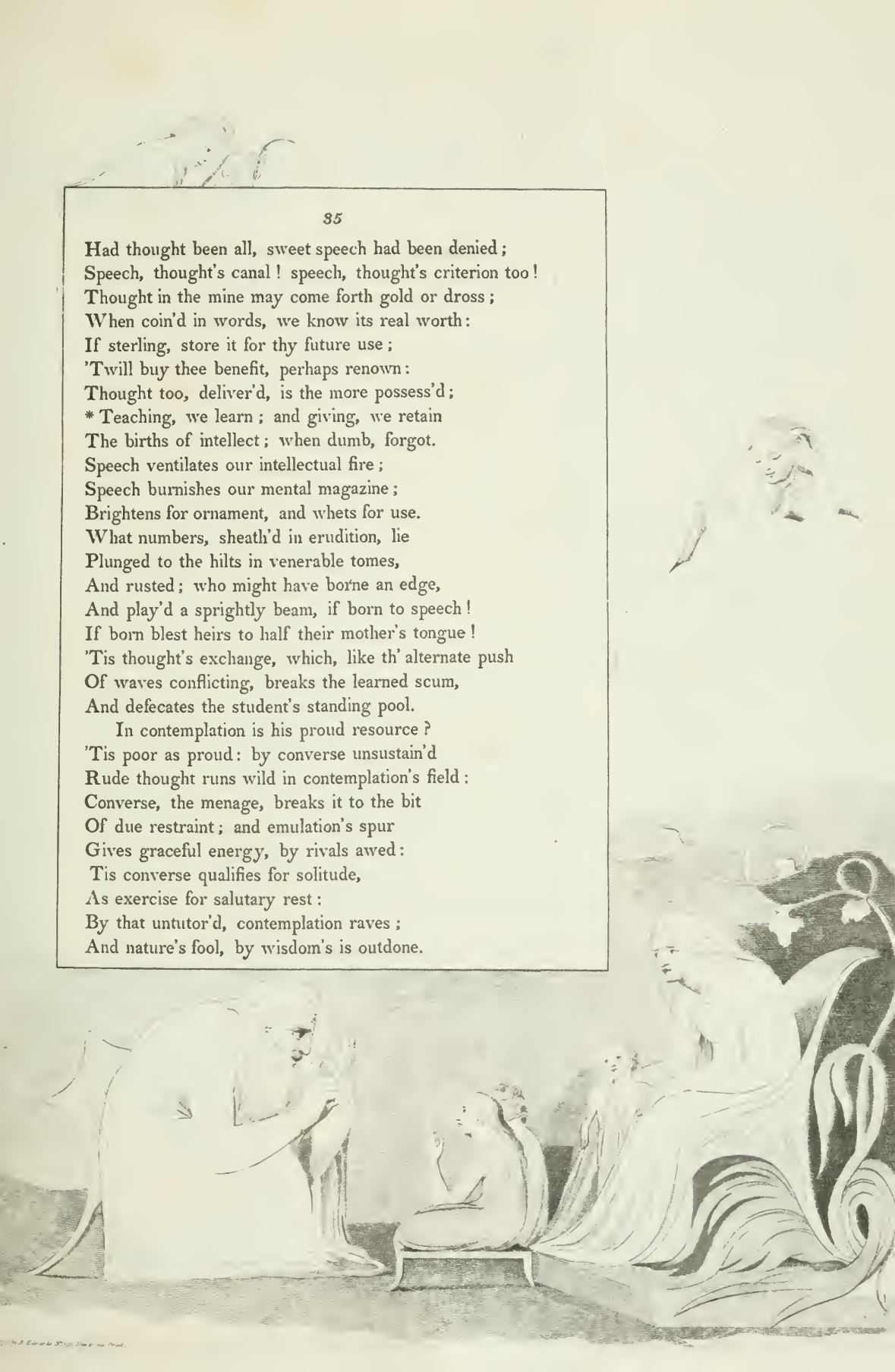


In furrow'd brows: so gentle life's descent,
We shut our eyes, and think it is a plain.
We take fair days in winter for the spring;
And turn our blessings into bane: since oft
Man must compute that age he cannot feel,
He scarce believes he 's older for his years:
Thus, at life's latest eve, we keep in store
One disappointment sure, to crown the rest—
The disappointment of a promised hour.

On this, or similar, PHILANDER! thou,
Whose mind was moral, as the preacher's tongue;
And strong to wield all science, worth the name;
How often we talk'd down the summer's sun,
And cool'd our passions by the breezy stream!
How often thaw'd and shorten'd winter's eve,
By conflict kind, that struck out latent truth,
Best found, so sought; to the recluse more coy!
Thoughts disentangle passing o'er the lip:
Clean runs the thread; if not, 'tis thrown away,
Or kept to tie up nonsense for a song—
Song, fashionably fruitless! such as stains
The fancy, and unhallow'd passion fires;
Chiming her saints to Cytherea's fane.

Know'st thou, LORENZO! what a friend contains?
As bees mix'd nectar draw from fragrant flowers,
So men from friendship, wisdom and delight;
Twins tied by nature; if they part, they die.
Hast thou no friend to set thy mind abroach?
Good sense will stagnate: thoughts shut up, want air,
And spoil, like bales unopen'd to the sun.

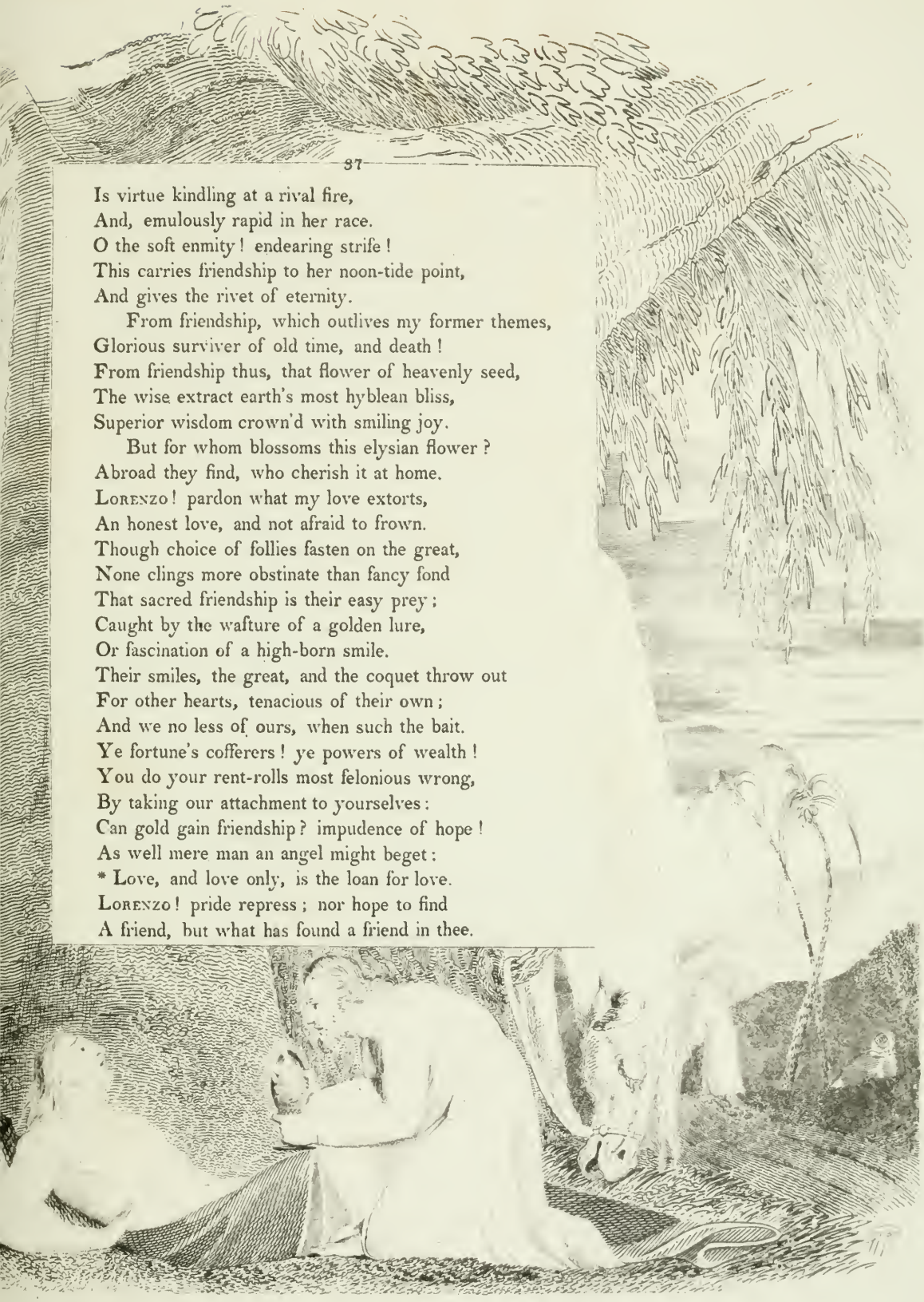
Had thought been all, sweet speech had been denied;
Speech, thought's canal! speech, thought's criterion too!
Thought in the mine may come forth gold or dross;
When coin'd in words, we know its real worth:
If sterling, store it for thy future use;
'Twill buy thee benefit, perhaps renown:
Thought too, deliver'd, is the more possess'd;
* Teaching, we learn; and giving, we retain
The births of intellect; when dumb, forgot.
Speech ventilates our intellectual fire;
Speech burnishes our mental magazine;
Brightens for ornament, and whets for use.
What numbers, sheath'd in erudition, lie
Plunged to the hilts in venerable tomes,
And rusted; who might have borne an edge,
And play'd a sprightly beam, if born to speech!
If born blest heirs to half their mother's tongue!
'Tis thought's exchange, which, like th' alternate push
Of waves conflicting, breaks the learned scum,
And defecates the student's standing pool.
In contemplation is his proud resource?
'Tis poor as proud: by converse unsustain'd
Rude thought runs wild in contemplation's field:
Converse, the menage, breaks it to the bit
Of due restraint; and emulation's spur
Gives graceful energy, by rivals awed:
Tis converse qualifies for solitude,
As exercise for salutary rest:
By that untutor'd, contemplation raves;
And nature's fool, by wisdom's is outdone.



Wisdom, though richer than Peruvian mines,
And sweeter than the sweet ambrosial hive,
What is she but the means of happiness?
That unobtain'd, than folly more a fool;
A melancholy fool, without her bells.
Friendship, the means of wisdom, richly gives
The precious end, which makes our wisdom wise.
Nature, in zeal for human amity,
Denies, or damps an undivided joy:
Joy is an import—joy is an exchange—
Joy flies monopolists; it calls for two:
Rich fruit! heaven-planted! never pluck'd by one.
Needful auxiliars are our friends, to give
To social man true relish of himself.
Full on ourselves descending in a line,
Pleasure's bright beam is feeble in delight:
Delight intense is taken by rebound;
Reverberated pleasures fire the breast.

Celestial happiness, whene'er she stoops
To visit earth, one shrine the goddess finds,
And one alone, to make her sweet amends
For absent heaven—the bosom of a friend;
Where heart meets heart, reciprocally soft,
Each other's pillow to repose divine.
Beware the counterfeit: in passion's flame
Hearts melt; but melt like ice, soon harder froze:
True love strikes root in reason, passion's foe:
Virtue alone entenders us for life—
I wrong her much—entenders us for ever:
Of friendship's fairest fruits, the fruit most fair

Is virtue kindling at a rival fire,
And, emulously rapid in her race.
O the soft enmity! endearing strife!
This carries friendship to her noon-tide point,
And gives the rivet of eternity.
From friendship, which outlives my former themes,
Glorious surviver of old time, and death!
From friendship thus, that flower of heavenly seed,
The wise extract earth's most hyblean bliss,
Superior wisdom crown'd with smiling joy.
But for whom blossoms this elysian flower?
Abroad they find, who cherish it at home.
Lorenzo! pardon what my love extorts,
An honest love, and not afraid to frown.
Though choice of follies fasten on the great,
None clings more obstinate than fancy fond
That sacred friendship is their easy prey;
Caught by the wafture of a golden lure,
Or fascination of a high-born smile.
Their smiles, the great, and the coquet throw out
For other hearts, tenacious of their own;
And we no less of ours, when such the bait.
Ye fortune's cofferers! ye powers of wealth!
You do your rent-rolls most felonious wrong,
By taking our attachment to yourselves:
Can gold gain friendship? impudence of hope!
As well mere man an angel might beget:
* Love, and love only, is the loan for love.
Lorenzo! pride repress; nor hope to find
A friend, but what has found a friend in thee.



All like the purchase—few the price will pay;
And this makes friends such miracles below.
What if, since daring on so nice a theme,
I shew thee friendship delicate as dear,
Of tender violations apt to die?
Reserve will wound it, and distrust destroy:
Deliberate on all things with thy friend:
But since friends grow not thick on every bough,
Nor every friend unrotten at the core,
First on thy friend deliberate with thyself;
Pause, ponder, sift; not eager in the choice,
Nor jealous of the chosen, fixing fix:
Judge before friendship, then confide till death:
Well for thy friend; but nobler far for thee;
How gallant danger for earth's highest prize!
A friend is worth all hazard we can run:
"Poor is the friendless master of a world;
"A world in purchase for a friend is gain."
So sung he, angels hear that angel sing!
Angels from friendship gather half their joy;
So sung PHILANDER, as his friend went round
In the rich ichor, in the generous blood
Of Bacchus, purple god of joyous wit,
A brow solute, and ever-laughing eye:
He drank long health, and virtue to his friend;
His friend, who warm'd him more, who more inspired.
Friendship's the wine of life; but friendship new,
Not such was his, is neither strong nor pure.
O! for the bright complexion, cordial warmth,
And elevating spirit of a friend,

For twenty summers ripening by my side;
All feculence of falsehood long thrown down—
All social virtues rising in his soul—
As crystal clear, and smiling as they rise!
Here nectar flows; it sparkles in our sight;
Rich to the taste, and genuine from the heart.
High-flavour'd bliss for gods! on earth how rare!
On earth how lost!—Philander is no more.
Think'st thou the theme intoxicates my song?
And I too warm?—too warm I cannot be
I loved him much; but now I love him more.
Like birds whose beauties languish, half conceal'd,
Till, mounted on the wing, their glossy plumes
Expanded shine with azure, green and gold;
How blessings brighten as they take their flight!
His flight Philander took—his upward flight,
If ever soul ascended: had he dropt,
That eagle genius! O had he let fall
One feather as he flew! I then had wrote
What friends might flatter; prudent foes forbear;
Rivals scarce damn; and Zoilus reprieve:
Yet what I can, I must: it were profane
To quench a glory lighted at the skies,
And cast in shadows his illustrious close.
Strange! the theme most affecting, most sublime,
Momentous most to man, should sleep unsung!
And yet it sleeps by genius unawaked
Pagan or christian, to the blush of wit.
Man's highest triumph! man's profoundest fall!
The death-bed of the just—is yet undrawn

By mortal hand—it merits a divine:
*Angels should paint it, angels ever there;
There on a post of honour, and of joy.
Dare I presume then? but PHILANDER bids,
And glory tempts, and inclination calls:
Yet am I struck; as struck the soul beneath
Aërial groves' impenetrable gloom;
Or in some mighty ruin's solemn shade;
Or gazing by pale lamps on high-born dust
In vaults; thin courts of poor unflatter'd kings!
Or at the midnight altar's hallow'd flame:
It is religion to proceed: I pause——
And enter, awed, the temple of my theme:
Is it his death-bed? no—it is his shrine:
Behold him, there, just rising to a god.
The chamber, where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven.
Fly, ye profane! if not, draw near with awe,
Receive the blessing, and adore the chance
That threw in this Bethesda your disease;
If unrestored by this, despair your cure:
For here resistless demonstration dwells;
A death-bed 's a detecter of the heart;
Here tired dissimulation drops her mask.
Through life's grimace that mistress of the scene!
Here real and apparent are the same—
You see the man; you see his hold on heaven;
If sound his virtue, as PHILANDER's sound.
Heaven waits not the last moment; owns her friends

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On this side death; and points them out to men:
A lecture silent, but of sovereign power!
To vice, confusion; and to virtue, peace.
Whatever farce the boastful hero plays,
Virtue alone has majesty in death;
And greater still, the more the tyrant frowns:
Philander! he severely frown'd on thee:
"No warning given—unceremonious fate!
"A sudden rush from life's meridian joys!
"A wrench from all we love—from all we are!
"A restless bed of pain! a plunge opaque
"Beyond conjecture! feeble nature's dread!
"Strong reason's shudder at the dark unknown!
"A sun extinguish'd! a just opening grave!
"And oh! the last—last—what? can words express?
"Thought reach? the last, last—silence of a friend!"
Where are those horrors, that amazement where,
This hideous group of ills, which singly shock?
Demand from man—I thought him man till now.
Through nature's wreck, through vanquish'd agonies,
Like the stars struggling through this midnight gloom,
What gleams of joy! what more than human peace!
Where, the frail mortal? the poor abject worm?
No, not in death, the mortal to be found.
His conduct is a legacy for all,
Richer than Mammon's for his single heir:
His comforters he comforts; great in ruin,
With unreluctant grandeur gives, not yields
His soul sublime: and closes with his fate.

How our hearts burnt within us at the scene!
Whence this brave bound o'er limits fix'd to man?
His GOD sustains him in his final hour—
His final hour brings glory to his GOD!
Man's glory HEAVEN vouchsafes to call her own.
We gaze; we weep—mix'd tears of grief and joy!
Amazement strikes; devotion bursts to flame;
Christians adore—and infidels believe.

As some tall tower, or lofty mountain's brow
Detains the sun, illustrious from its height,
While rising vapours and descending shades
With damps and darkness drown the spacious vale;
Undamp'd by doubt, undarken'd by despair
PHILANDER, thus, augustly rears his head
At that black hour, which general horror sheds
On the low level of the inglorious throng:
Sweet peace, and heavenly hope, and humble joy
Divinely beam on his exalted soul,
Destruction gild, and crown him for the skies,
With incommunicable lustre bright.

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